1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

134 Lemu, pure white sand is found, a much more fertile soil as far as I can judge, which makes the country in the eyes of the native 'more beautiful' —by which he really means 'more useful'. Lastly, the low broken hills of Nupe are ferruginous, and on their slopes iron ore is mined by the natives.

VEGETATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

137 The geographical position of Nupe country makes it a typical area of transition from the southern forest belt to the arid savannahs of the north. Narrow strips or patches of thick rain-forest-like vegetation accompany river valleys and watercourses; but then, inland, we find a country of thin forest, shrub, and 'orchard-bush', alternating with beautiful open park-land, such as round Bida and Agaie, where intensive cultivation has cleared bush and shrub. The plant-life, again, reflects the geographical position of Nupe midway between north and south. Nupe is one of the northernmost countries in which the oil-palm is found, and yam and the southern variety of maize are cultivated; it is, at the same time, the southernmost habitat of the date-palm, the shea-nut tree, and millet crops. The trees and plants which are important for Nupe production and diet are these, in the order of importance. In the drier inland areas we find the locust-bean tree (*Parkia filikoidea*), in Nupe *lonci*; the shea-nut tree (*Bassia Parkii*), *kocí*; the indigo tree or vine (*Lonchocarpus cyanescens*), *eci*, and indigo grass (*Indigofera arrecta*), *tsentse*; baobab (*Andansonia digitata*), *kuci* or *kuka*; silk-cotton tree (*Malvaceae*), *lembubu*; date-palm, *dobina*; and finally the mango, *mangoro*, a European importation. On irrigated land and in the thick groves near watercourses grow the oil-palm and other, less important, varieties of palm-trees, kola-nut tree (*Sterculia acuminata*), *ebi*, and banana, *yaba*. Only the kola-nut tree, the mango, and partly the banana are cultivated, all other trees growing wild. Nupe cultivation comprises the following kinds of crops and edible plants and roots: three millet varieties, bulrush-millet (*Pennisetum*), *mayi*, 'late millet' (*Spicatum*), *kpayi*, and guinea-corn (*Sorghum vulgare*), *eyi*; yam, *eci*; cassava, *rogo*; maize, *kábà*; ground-nuts, *guzya*; rice, *jenkafa*; sugar-cane, *kpâsanako*; and onions, *lubasa*, in the river marshes; further sweet potatoes, *duku*; beans and ground-beans, *ezo* and *cdzu*; red pepper, *yaká*, and various kinds of greens which are eaten as vegetable. Of plants utilized commercially and in native industry cotton, *lulu*; henna, *lali*; hemp, *rama* or *egba*, 'rope'; and gourds, *ero*, are the most important.

241 241 177 In this enumeration of crops and plants of Nupe we have left the field of physical environment in the narrow sense. This rich and varied system of cultivation reflects already a standard of civilization, technical achievement, and inventiveness of a people which has learned to master its environment. Some of the plants and crops mentioned have been adopted comparatively recently and introduced into Nupe from the north and south. As the Nupe names for hemp, henna, or cassava are borrowed from Hausa the plants themselves represent 'borrowed' cultural goods. The cultivation of onions was introduced into Nupe from

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

Hausa, and partly from Bornu, in historical times.[1] Nor is the cultivation of yam an original cultural possession of the Nupe, which is proved by two facts: first, that the Nupe north and east of the Niger are unfamiliar with certain important ways of preparing yam common in all 'real' yam countries, e.g. the drying of yam; and second, that yam, though to-day an important staple food, has still no place in their sacrifices, ritual meals, and first-crop ceremonies: only corn and millet may be used for these ritual offerings.[2] Cassava, finally, has only been introduced in the last thirty years; thirty years ago, I was told by a missionary, it was almost unknown in Nupe. Thus communication and culture contact have helped to mould the physical environment of to-day. This manifold agricultural system, however, could not have been evolved if the natural conditions of the country had not been favourable. The meeting of south and north in the vegetation of Nupe, the coexistence of marsh-land and savannah country, the natural irrigation and the strips and patches of thick forest, all this was as essential to the development of the productive system of the country as was the inventiveness and stage of civilization of its people. We cannot attempt to decide which factor, environment or civilization, has had the larger share in this development. The rigid distinction between environment and culture has long been abandoned as misleading and futile. For our investigation it is irrelevant. We can well regard the environment as it appears at present, the natural resources as they are utilized by the people to-day, as a unitary complex of factors the effect of which, upon the life and well-being of the people, we have to examine.

CLIMATE

Nupe, lower lying than any of the neighbouring districts, with its two big rivers, their dry, blazing sand-banks in the dry season, and their vast swamps in the rains, is one of the hottest and at the same time most humid districts of Nigeria. The river valleys especially, and the hollow in which Bida is situated, are damp, airless, and unhealthy. The following figures give the average temperature, humidity, and rainfall in Bida for 1933:[3]

TABLE I

	Jan.	*Feb.*	*Mar.*	*Apr.*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*	*Annual total*
Minimum temp.	60	70	72	72	71	71	68	68	68	70	70	67	..
Maximum temp.	93	98	102	103	98	88	92	90	85	91	96	96	..
Humidity (per cent.)	60	30	66	71	78	92	92	92	85	76	75	62	..
Rainfall (in inches)	2·99	..	..	1·99	3·06	12·33	15·41	15·82	11·87	2·29	0·32	..	66·08

[1] It is still practised to-day by the Bornu settlers of Kutigi.

[2] There is one exception: Mokwa, in the north-west corner of Nupe, where yam is sacrificed at certain annual rites. But the exception proves the rule, for Mokwa is the gate for cultural influences from Yoruba.

[3] This table was copied from the readings taken regularly in Bida Middle School.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

kinship group and royal 'house', different though they are in many other respects. The possession of land is only one instance of the joint, 'corporate', rights which characterize the two analogous groups. But of this we shall say more later.

Royal Estates

The three royal estates are situated immediately outside the town walls of Bida. On each of the estates we find a small hamlet, called *esoži*, where (former) royal slaves are living, who were appointed to work the land and look after the royal property.[1] Each of the three *esoži* is placed under the headship of a head slave, styled *Sokyara*—a titled overseer of the royal estates.

The first cultivation in the year—the clearing and first hoeing—was always done by large-scale communal labour in which over a hundred people used to join—slaves, *bara*, peasants from the neighbourhood—and which lasted for one or two days. The *Etsu* himself arranged for food and drink (sorghum beer) and for the customary band of drummers and flute-players to play during the work and at the dance afterwards. After this first cultivation the care of the land was left entirely to the slaves. Originally the whole yield of the royal estates went to the *Etsu* and to the other heads of the royal houses. The *esoži* used to supply over a hundred bundles of corn annually. The royal landlord gave his slaves in return food and clothing, and cared for their various needs. The married slaves (as everywhere in Nupe) were given fairly large individual farm-plots of their own which were not only sufficient to provide food for their families but as a rule also allowed some surplus for trade.

Under modern conditions the position of the royal slaves in the *esoži* has been assimilated to that of clients who only pay an annual tithe from the produce of their farms. But the different Emirs dealt differently with the question of adapting the management to modern conditions. *Etsu* Mohamadu, who was not very interested in farming, abandoned the communal work of the first cultivation; he also lost all personal touch with his *esoži*, and insisted only on the annual *dzankó*. *Etsu* Bello, on the other hand, maintained the communal work of the first cultivation; he demanded one-third of the total produce as 'tithe', leaving the rest to the people of the *esoži*. Under the late *Etsu* Saidu and under the present *Etsu* every family head in the *esoži* paid one to two bundles of sorghum or late millet to the royal landlord, the *Sokyara* acting as intermediary—the total tithe amounting to about ten to fifteen bundles a year. When the Government built the new residence for the present Emir a final change took place. The land outside the Wuya gate of Bida, which formerly belonged to the house of *Etsu* Masaba, was bought by the Government as a site for the new building, and turned into Crown land.[2] The

[1] During the dry season the three royal estates, being situated directly outside the town gates of Bida, are the natural camping-ground for the donkey and cattle caravans that pass through Bida. Now it is the customary practice that these camps—rather primitive grass-shelters erected by the people of the *Etsu*—are always pitched on the farm-land belonging to the ruling *Etsu*. His farms have thus the benefit of the well-manured soil.

[2] In accordance with Nupe practice the fruit-bearing trees were not included

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

present Emir, who comes from the royal house of Umaru Majigi, thus owns, unlike any of his predecessors, two royal estates: his own family estate near the Jima gate, south of Bida, and the new estate on the Crown land near the Wuya gate, which, like the residence itself, belongs to the modern accoutrements of his office. The *esoži* people on his family estate were prepared to work for him on the usual *dzankó* arrangement. But the *esoži* of *Etsu* Masaba—the *esoži* on the land that had now become his official estate—refused to work for their new landlord on the old terms, and demanded money wages. Finally, when the *Etsu* in 1936 started an experimental farm for mixed farming on his family estate, the *esoži* workers there also denounced the old agreement and demanded wages; for this was work of a new kind altogether, work carried out entirely for their landlord, no longer work after their own fashion, from which they could hand over the traditional share in the produce.

Non-agricultural Use of Land

A few words must be said in conclusion about rights to land that is used for other than agricultural purposes, such as clay-pits from which clay is obtained for pottery or for the sun-dried bricks used in house-building, the iron-ore deposits which are used by the native iron-ore smelters, or the space needed for the dye-pits of the indigo dyers. All these stretches of land, whether they are situated close to the house (like the dye-pits) or some distance away (like the clay-pits and the ferruginous hill-side) are accessible to all.

The thick strips of rain-forest near the rivers are specially valuable 'no-man's-land'. Here woodcarvers and carpenters find the timber they need for their work. The branches of certain palm-trees are used for rafters in roof building; a certain species of reed is used for the making of the curtain-like mats which the Nupe call *eshegi* (the Hausa *asabari*); other species of grass, and the leaves of the dum-palm, are used for mat-making and the making of straw hats. The fact that these materials are found only in certain places, far away from the town where the craftsmen who are using them are living, is turned to economic use, and the procuring of the raw material thus gains independent commercial significance: the big palm-branch rafters are sold on Bida market by the men who cut them; and men and women frequently use the time of comparative leisure in the dry season to travel down to the river in order to collect dum-palm leaves and marsh-grass, which they sell later, for a little money, to mat- and straw hat makers.

The collecting and selling of firewood (which is done by women) and the cutting and selling of grass for roofing (done by men) belongs to a slightly different category. For in this case the non-agricultural use of land does not apply to 'no-man's-land'; the farmers and their families

in this transaction and remained the property of the original landlords, i.e. the head of the house of *Etsu* Masaba. Thus in January 1936, when the new official residence of the Emir had been standing already for almost a year, people from the house of *Etsu* Masaba were collecting the fruits of the trees on the new Crown land.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER XII

AGRICULTURE: PRODUCTION

COUNTRY AND CROPS

BY far the largest proportion of the Nupe population work on the land. In the purely agricultural districts in Trans-Kaduna 9,000 out of a male population of 11,000 are farmers. Even in Bida town, the centre of crafts, industry, and trade, more than a quarter of the population earn their livelihood on the land.[1] This shows clearly the predominant position of agriculture in the productive system of the country. We have already spoken of the rich and complex character of Nupe agriculture, due both to the favourable configuration of the environment and to the advanced civilization of the people, who were always ready to adopt and introduce advantageous techniques of production from other groups. The wide scope and the complexity of Nupe agriculture enables the people to rely in their nutritive arrangements on a large variety of crops which, as we shall see, is well distributed over the year.

But these facts must be correlated with the facts of local distribution and specialization of agricultural techniques. The most important local specialization refers to marsh-land farming. The marsh-land comprises only perhaps one-tenth or less of the total land under cultivation. The intensive cultivation, however, and the concentration on certain specially valuable crops (above all rice) make it a most important factor in the productive system of the country. Other forms of specialization which, on a smaller scale, influence the productive and nutritive balance of Nupe, are due to differences in the quality of the soil and, indirectly, to population factors and conditions of landownership. Thus cotton and ground-nuts thrive specially in Trans-Kaduna, the most fertile region of Nupe. The comparatively poor selection of crops round Bida is due both to the more exhausted soil and the comparative scarcity of land in this most densely populated area. Less yam, for instance, is grown round Bida than elsewhere, as yam demands a new plot every year (see p. 209). Nor is bulrush-millet grown near Bida, although in this case the reasons put forward by the people are different: it is no good, I was told, to try planting this early crop near a large town; the multitude of birds would devour the crop as soon as it appeared. The difference in the quality of the land in Beni country and in Trans-Kaduna is also reflected in the varying length of the period during which a plot can be kept under continuous cultivation. In Mokwa a plot is generally worked for four to five years; round Kutigi for six to seven years; in Doko, in Beni country, only for three to four years. In this last district, with its heavy population and its restricted land-resources, a rudimentary system of animal manure, with horse- and goat-dung, is practised by the people. Asked to explain why it was that only this one section of Nupe was practising animal manuring, the people said: 'Look for yourself; you will see that

[1] Of a total of 7,714 Bida men 1,664 are farmers. The figures mentioned here are taken from a local census taken in Bida Division in 1930.

[p.205]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 we have little land, much less than people in other parts of the country. We even have to make our farms up on the hill-side since there is no vacant land left in the valley.' This is true enough. When I visited Doko on my second expedition I saw that a few enterprising men had started farming on the steep stony hills at the back of the village—a thing nobody dreamed of doing when I stayed in Doko on my first expedition two years before.

241 231 The appreciation of manure has led in Beni country to an interesting co-operation between the population of a village, or a certain landlord, and the groups of nomadic Fulani herdsmen who come down regularly in the dry season to find pastures for their herds. The Nupe landowners invite the head of such a nomadic group, and sometimes induce him by presents of food or assistance in the building of the camp, to make his camp on their fallow land. This procedure is repeated every year with a new plot of fallow land. The year after the land has been thus manured it is taken under cultivation. I have myself seen the enormous difference in the growth of the crops between a plot on which the Fulani had made their camp and other, ordinary farm-plots.[1]

241 311 Cultivation is also to some extent carried on inside the villages and even inside Bida town. In the villages, where large open spaces separate the different *efu*, the cultivation inside the village is fairly extensive, and one grows there the main crops, millet, guinea-corn, ground-nuts, &c. In densely populated villages where there is little open space left, and in Bida town, the people still grow a few things. Something will be planted, in fact, wherever there is room, all along the town walls, round the compound wall, on any open space in front of the house and even inside the house. Here are grown chiefly greens and vegetables, beans, sorrel, red pepper, also sweet potatoes, cassava or maize, and hemp. As a rule the small plots in or near the house are planted with crops which are easy to tend, and this work is left to the old men who can no longer walk long distances and do heavy work. Even inside Bida there exists a certain specialization; on the small stretch of marsh-land that runs through the town, and in the thick groves on the banks of the two streams, typical marsh-land crops are grown: sugar-cane, rice, and bananas.

241 In this large variety of crops cultivated in Nupe not all are, of course, of equal importance from a nutritive or general economic point of view. Again, it is impossible to give a simple formula. The staple crops, the crops on which the food supply of the people primarily depends, are millet, sorghum, yam, and, to a lesser extent, rice. From the point of view of trade the most important crops are rice, ground-nuts, cotton, but also sorghum and yam and a few lesser crops. Cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes (grown inland) are of secondary importance only. This is shown clearly in the attitude of the Nupe farmer towards these crops. The pride of the farmer is always his millet, sorghum, and yam farm. Cassava and maize, the Nupe would say, grow anywhere, and anybody, farmer or no farmer, can grow them. A man who would rely on this

[1] Among the Bida landlords it is an accepted arrangement to place one's fallow land at the disposal of the Bororó previous to leasing it to a new tenant. The landlord can then obtain a much higher price for his land.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

type of cultivation only would lay himself open at once to the criticism of his fellow farmers. As regards cassava, it is known to have little nutritive value—'only yam or millet or sorghum make a man strong'. Both crops may, however, provide a useful stopgap for the time between the harvest of the main crops.

We have said earlier in this book that the complexity of the agricultural system of the Nupe is due partly to the close contact they have had with other cultures, in particular with neighbouring groups. We realize here that this was more than an occasional contact, and more also than some obscure process of diffusion. It was to a large extent part of that assimilation and cultural 'learning' that goes hand in hand with intensive political unification of long standing and all that it entails—regular intercourse, a wide net of transport and traffic, and an ever-extending economic co-operation. As the kingdom brought together peoples from the marsh-land and from the inland forests, farmers from the 'yam countries' and farmers from the 'millet districts', it made them learn from each other and at the same time utilize each other's special resources. Assimilation and specialization are both features of an expanding economic area. We have, in fact, a threefold correlation; for these two features involve another, third, factor: a large-scale system of organized distribution, that is, trade and marketing.

FARMING TECHNIQUE

Like most African tribes the Nupe practise hoe-agriculture. They use two kinds of hoes, a large heavy type called *zuku*, and a small type called *dugba*. The *zuku* has a heavy handle, about 16 in. long, bent somewhat like a hook, into the angle of which the broad shovel-like blade (8 in. long) is fitted. The *dugba* has a straight handle, 20 in. long, with a less broad, slightly bent blade inserted at the end. The heavy hoe is used for throwing up mounds and ridges, the lighter hoe mainly for weeding and other less heavy work. The Nupe also use a long bush-knife, *gada* (now mostly of European manufacture), for cutting grain stalks or digging out yam.

When using the heavy hoe the farmer stands across the ridge he is making, with legs wide apart, the body bent forward, and, gripping the handle of the hoe with both hands, he lifts it to the level of his head and shoulders and brings it down again between his legs, with one swing digging up the earth and throwing it behind him on to the mound or ridge he is preparing. When the mound or ridge has reached the proper height, he moves a few steps forward to repeat this action, until the ridge extends to the edge of the field. Having finished one ridge, the farmer turns round to throw up the next, parallel, ridge.

Nupe cultivation works both with large round mounds and low long ridges; the mounds are 2–3 ft. high and about 3 ft. in diameter, and are arranged in long rows; the mounds are spaced (measured from top to top) about 4–5 ft. in the same row and 6 ft. from row to row. The ridges are 1 ft. high and are drawn, more or less straight, right across the field in parallel lines about 3 ft. apart. The two types of cultivation are used

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 for different kinds of crops. Ground-nuts, sweet potatoes, and certain vegetables are always planted in ridges, yam always in mounds. As regards the other crops, the rule is that in a first cultivation, that is, on a plot planted for the first time after having lain fallow, mounds are thrown up; in the subsequent year the mounds are turned into ridges, as a result of the practice of 'shifting' the ridges and interplanting in the second half of the planting season. The throwing up of mounds is by far the heavier and longer work. 'Lazy' farmers—in the eyes of the people—thus sometimes prefer the easier job of making ridges even in a first year's cultivation.[1] Big trees are always left standing on the farms and cultivation is carried out round them. The Nupe farmers appreciate the shade of big trees during the heat of the day. Small trees on the farm-land which do not bear fruit are lopped or cut about 4 ft. from the ground. This becomes important in the period of lying fallow; for the tree-stumps and undergrowth which the farmer leaves standing on his fields help to put the fallow land under a growth of 'bush' rather than grass, thus assisting and speeding up the regeneration of the soil.[2]

241 The cultivation on the marsh-land farms is adapted to the conditions
312 of a natural annual irrigation by the flooded rivers and watercourses. The irrigated area is divided into square plots, approximately 6 ft. by 9 ft., each consisting of from four to six ridges running parallel and two ridges at right angles on the upper and lower end. The ridges are flat and narrow; they do not connect at the corners, but leave small channels open; by means of these ridges the water from the flooded river is distributed evenly on the cultivated plots, and at the same time kept standing there.

241 In the lay-out of the Nupe farms the aesthetic aspect is strongly pro-
517 nounced. The farmers pay much attention to drawing their ridges nicely parallel and as straight as possible, and to distributing their mounds symmetrically over the field. The nice rounding-off of the border of a field is specially appreciated. Frequently one finds ridges and cross-ridges arranged in a symmetrical and even conspicuously ornamental pattern. Similarly, the skill and keenness of the farmer is judged by the clean look of his farm, with all weeds, leaves, and brushwood cleared away. An overgrown, untidy looking farm invariably elicits the comment: *za-gá de kokari à*, 'that man makes no effort'.

ROTATION OF CROPS

242 The Nupe system of agriculture is based on shifting cultivation combined with a well-worked-out rotation of crops. Plots are kept under cultivation for from four to seven years (see p. 205), i.e. till the land 'grows tired', and then abandoned temporarily. The individual farmer does not, however, always wait until failing crops have warned him of

[1] The mounds represent the more thorough cultivation, utilizing a deeper and, I believe, also heavier layer of the subsoil. This is shown in the fact that yam, which demands a heavy and more humid soil, is always grown on mounds, while ground-nuts, for which light sandy soil is best suitable, are invariably grown on the low ridges. (Cf. Faulkner and Mackie, op. cit., pp. 147–8.)

[2] See op. cit., p. 44.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241

The Agricultural Calendar of Nupe

As mentioned elsewhere (see Appendix, p. 411)[a] the Nupe peasant calendar counts 12 lunar months starting from the month which sees the beginning of the rainy season. It will be realized that the various dates given in this synoptic chart cannot be fixed exactly. To simplify the chart it is assumed that the rains start punctually on the 1st of April, and that the planting cycle thus begins with the first month in native counting. Needless to say that in practice the whole time-table will frequently be found to have moved forward or backward by as much as a fortnight or three weeks as the rains set in earlier or later than our key date. Besides, there occur certain other variations in the time sequence which are due to local conditions or the varying efforts of individual farmers; these variations have only partly been included in the chart.

Calendar		*Planting operations*		*Trees*	*State of food stores*
Europ.	*Native*	*Inland farms (incl. irrigated plots)*	*Marsh-land farms*		
April	1st month	Belated preparation of yam plots and planting of yams by farmers who have left it till the new season. Sowing of bulrush-millet and maize. Sowing of late millet and sorghum. Sowing of ground-nuts. Interplanting of okra, melon, and cassava.	Planting of cassava or sweet potatoes.	Fruit of locust-bean tree picked, also mango.	
May	2nd month	First weeding (takes 2–3 weeks). Short period of rest (5–7 days). Yam is sprouting leaves, bulrush-millet and maize 2 ft. high.		Locust-bean harvest finished.	
June	3rd month	Second weeding. Sowing of cotton. Planting of sweet potatoes, rice, and red pepper. Also of cassava grown on separate plots. Latest date for planting ground-nuts.		Shea-nuts picked and dried.	Yam and late millet begin to give out.
July	4th month	Harvesting of bulrush-millet and maize. Interplanting of ground-beans and late beans. First yam harvest. Picking of okra.	Harvesting of cassava and sweet potatoes; sowing of rice. Sowing of first maize crop.	Shea-nut harvest finished.	
	5th month	Third weeding, and 'shifting the ridges'. (This operation may be postponed by a months.)		Preparation of shea-butter.	Fresh sugar-cane. Scarcity of rice.
August		Beginning of first ground-nut harvest.			Fresh ground-nuts for food.
	6th month	Fourth weeding and transplanting of late millet and sorghum.			
September		Sweet potatoes and melons harvested.	Transplanting of rice.	Second mango crop.	Bulrush millet finished.
	7th month	Some farmers carry out the 'shifting of ridges' now instead of two months earlier. Harvest of early maturing rice.	Harvest of first maize crop.		Sorghum giving out in certain districts. New rice.

[a] [Erratum - should be p 419. — Analyst]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241

Calendar		Planting operations		Trees	State of food stores
Europ.	*Native*	*Inland farms (incl. irrigated plots)*	*Marsh-land farms*		
October	7th month	Second yam harvest. Harvest of ground-beans, sweet potatoes, and cassava grown on separate plots.			New yam, from second harvest, for storage. New sweet potatoes and cassava.
November	8th month	Preparation of new yam-plots and planting of yam (may be postponed for 2 or 3 months). Second ground-nut harvest begins. Harvest of late millet.	Sowing of second maize crop.		Yam from first harvest finished. Sorghum giving out.
December	9th month	Harvest of sorghum. Picking of cotton and red pepper. Harvest of late beans.	Harvest of rice (late maturing crop).		Sorghum and late millet for storage.
January	10th month		Harvest of second maize crop.		
February	11th month	End of ground-nut harvest. Burning of farms. Some farmers prepare new yam plots now instead of 3 months earlier.		First mango crop begins, also harvest of locust-bean.	
March	12th month	Burning of farms goes on.			

Selection of Species and Varieties

Most of the crops enumerated in the chart occur in more than one variety. Yam is the only exception; although grown in a large number of different varieties in Southern Nigeria, it is known only in one variety among the Nupe, which is incidentally another proof that Nupe is not a 'real yam country'. Sorghum (*eyi*) was originally grown in Nupe in a number of varieties. I could collect names for three main sorghum varieties: *kúyi*, *dindúrogi*, and *ekpá*. Of these three varieties *kúyi* has disappeared almost completely, and *dindúrogi* is fast disappearing. The latter variety was formerly specially valued for the black and red dye that was obtained from the stalk. The importation of European dyes has reduced considerably its importance, so that to-day *ekpá* is grown almost exclusively. *Ekpá* is also agreed to be the finest and best tasting of the three varieties; its survival thus appears to reflect a certain growing fastidiousness with regard to food, which may well have influenced market prices and demands, and thus indirectly the policy of the sorghum growers.

[586]

Two varieties of rice are grown: the 'sweet' rice, a six-months' crop, in the river marshes, and a variety which matures in ninety days, on the less well irrigated inland farms. Till six years ago only the native variety of maize was cultivated. To-day the American variety (brought from Europe), which is sweeter and has a softer husk, is more and more widely adopted by the natives. This new variety is easily recognized since it is grown as a separate crop, in separate ridges, while the indigenous variety is interplanted through millet and sorghum or yam. The two millet varieties, finally, bulrush and late millet, have been mentioned already.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

The proportion of maize and the various other millet and sorghum varieties in the productive scheme of one household is illustrated in the following typical example: on a farm which produced a total millet and sorghum crop of twenty bundles the different varieties were distributed as follows:

Bulrush-millet . .	2 bundles
Maize	2–3 „
Late millet . . .	8 „
Sorghum . . .	10 „

Sorghum and late millet are clearly shown to be the main staple crops as compared with bulrush-millet and maize, the importance of which, as we shall see later, lies in their subsidiary, 'stopgap', character.

Some enterprising farmers, and farmers in certain districts of Nupe, have added to this table of crops certain special, commercially valuable, plants or have given over a large portion of their farm-land to the cultivation of plants which normally would play only a secondary, unimportant, part. Thus we find henna (*lali*) cultivated in many parts; indigo (*eri*) is collected and prepared especially in the districts of Sakpe and Kutigi. Recently farmers in Lemu, north of Bida, have started the cultivation of red pepper (*yaki*) as a main crop, in the place of groundnuts. The first two kinds of produce have a considerable marketing value in the country, the last kind is meant for European export.

Clearing

The dry season is not completely a season of leisure. Many Nupe farmers will visit their fields more or less regularly even during that time, perhaps once a week, to 'look over the farm' as they say, to see that animals have not done damage to ridges and mounds, or to collect brushwood for fuel, or leaves for which there is always use in the Nupe household.

In the dry season comes also the first agricultural activity of the year, the *nne tsaka*, the clearing and burning of the farms. On farms (fallow or virgin land) which are to be taken under cultivation for the first time, grass and shrubs are cut and afterwards the farms are burned. Old farms also are cleared summarily by burning the dead stalks, leaves, and undergrowth that have been left there from last year. Later the first rains will wash the ashes into the soil, thus completing the process of 'green manure', which the Nupe farmers consciously utilize (see p. 221). The burning of the farms takes place at any time between January and May; new plots, the clearing of which involves the heavier work, being as a rule burned earlier in the season, cultivated plots (on which the stalks and leaves are given ample time to dry and rot) towards the beginning of the rains. The heaviest and lengthiest work is the clearing of virgin land. If carried out early it will curtail seriously the short leisure season of the Nupe farmer, and if left till late will add to the work of an already very busy time of the year. Clearing virgin land is, in fact, considered so heavy and inconvenient work that the farmers, especially those who cannot count on the assistance of a large working group, make all efforts to avoid taking virgin land under cultivation.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 This reluctance must be regarded as one of the main factors responsible for the growth of the institution of 'borrowing land', which we have described in the preceding chapter.

Sowing and Planting

[185] The Nupe, possessing an elaborate calendar system which works with six seasons and twelve lunar months, have no difficulty in determining the coming of the rainy season. Besides, they regard the appearance (in [225] April) of a small red insect, which is significantly called *gbama*, 'early rains', as a sign of the approaching rains. The first light showers, which as a rule are accompanied by thunderstorms, are ignored. After the first heavy rain, which may last for several hours or a whole night, has thoroughly softened the soil, village and town spring into activity. In the morning after the rain you will see the people wandering out to their fields. They walk in groups, neighbours or families together, fathers with their boys. Dogs trot behind their masters, and often a man or boy will lead a goat which will then feed on leaves and shrubs on the field.

[241] The men wear working dress: a loin-cloth and, if it is cold, a heavier cloth slung round the shoulders, and a straw hat as protection from [242] the sun. They carry their hoe over the shoulder, and gourds with water, food and seeds, over the arm. In many parts farmers carry their bows and arrows with them when they go out to their fields as 'protection from wild beasts'—a habit which is dying out but slowly, although there is hardly any need for it to-day. I have never seen these weapons used.

The nature of the first farming activity depends on whether or not the farmer has done what 'good' farmers are expected to do, namely, planted his yams already in the rains, immediately after the harvest. If he has not done so he will now at once start preparing his yam field; if he has, he is free to turn his attention to the planting of bulrush-millet and maize. Of five farmers whose daily activities I was recording in Mokwa, three had planted yam in the rainy season and two (who both had to work single-handed) waited until the beginning of the new farming season. With the 'good' farmer, we will start with the planting of millet.

243 Again there are certain variations. Where millet and sorghum are planted as successive crops no hoeing or re-hoeing as a rule precedes the planting; as we shall see later the plots are normally prepared during the previous season. Where millet and sorghum are planted after other first-year crops or on a new plot, ridging, occupying the first few days of the new season, precedes the sowing. The technique of planting, moreover, varies slightly according to whether one plants on mounds or ridges, but is the same for both millet varieties and for sorghum. I will now describe the scene one will meet on the Nupe fields when planting is in progress. The farmer has divested himself of his superfluous clothing, his food and water-gourds, and has placed his things out of the way, under a shady tree. Perhaps he has his small boys with him, whom [257] he lets play by themselves in a corner of the field while he goes on with his work. Tied to his left arm the planter carries the seeds in a small

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

a new plot, and new ridges must therefore be prepared. The planting itself is also a slow process, the seeds are placed into the soil with the fingers and the earth then stamped down with the heel.

The planting of yams demands no less skill and patience. Yam is likewise planted on a fresh plot and involves the preparation of new mounds —the work of several days. The planting itself is also spread over a number of days, one man needing two or three days to plant one acre. Half a tuber is used as seed (called *ebu*). The planter carries the seed yams in a cloth tied round his waist; he inserts the tuber about 1 foot deep into the loose earth of the mound, and then pats the top of the mound back into shape either with his hands or with the light planting hoe. Having covered a section of the field, he goes over it again and places a grass cap over the top of each mound, weighting it down with earth; the grass cap protects the young plant from the sun and at the same time provides a convenient sign by which the planter can distinguish planted from unplanted mounds. About two months after planting stakes 4 feet high are put up on the side of the mounds, which will serve as support for the vine; sometimes a conveniently placed tree may be used for the same purpose.

Now, assuming that planting has started early in April, our time-table has taken us to the end of the month or the beginning of May. It is by then high time for the first weeding, which is to clear the ridges for the growing plant and to remove roots, leaves, and undergrowth which the burning of the farms has but imperfectly destroyed. Not until after this weeding, which takes the best part of three weeks, will the farmer be able to enjoy a short period of rest, between five days and a week. It reaches as a rule into June, and into the short break in the rains which is known as the 'little dry season'. The period of rest inaugurates a more leisurely period of work. In June many farmers work on their large farms only two days in succession, and rest on the third day, or devote it to the lighter work on the garden-plots round their houses. The 'second weeding', which takes from five to ten days, and is to clear the young millet plants of the high grass, is also a task allowing of comparative leisure, except when it coincides with the planting of cotton, a delicate and lengthy operation, which falls in the same time. Farmers who possess marsh-land plots are sowing rice in June; on inland farms cassava is planted—but cassava can be planted at any time, and needs little skill or attention: cuttings of the stem are simply put into the ground; one person can plant a half-acre field easily in a day. The beginning of July heralds a period of increased activity. It starts with the reaping of bulrush-millet, to be followed immediately by the sowing of beans and another, third, weeding. Let me illustrate the change from comparative leisure to renewed pressure of work by quoting a few entries from my diary for 1936.

Doko, 15 May.—Bulrush-millet 2–3 feet high. Yam vines fairly long. Yam stakes are being put up. Cassava and sweet potatoes are being planted.

Doko, 1 June.—The people have begun to sow cotton, and some farmers also rice. Grass on millet-sorghum farms very high. Weeding ('second weeding') in progress in many places.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241

Kutigi, 5 June.—Cotton is planted, weeding of millet-sorghum farms going on at the same time.
Kutigi, 15 June.—Weeding still in progress.
Kutigi, 5 July.—Harvesting of bulrush-millet and maize begins.
Kutigi, 12 July.—Bulrush-millet harvest finished; crop all dried and stored. 'Third weeding' in progress. Beans are sown.
Kutigi, 18 July.—First yams dug out.

Weeding and Transplanting

Let us for a moment interrupt our description and examine in more detail the technique of weeding and certain related farming operations. The Nupe practise four main weedings or hoeings, each of which is known by a special name. The first weeding, called *gongi* ('small grass'?), is carried out three or four weeks after the first planting and serves, as mentioned already, to clear the ridges from roots and undergrowth left on the farms from last year. At the same time the ridges which have not been newly made this year are re-done and put in proper shape. The second weeding, *sucé*, follows about three weeks later, 'when the bulrush-millet is arm-high', and clears the millet plant of the newly grown grass. The third weeding or hoeing is called *sa wo gi*, 'making small ridges'; it combines a thorough cultivation with an operation best termed the 'shifting of the ridges'. Carried out shortly after the harvest of bulrush-millet, it consists in hoeing away the original mounds or ridges and throwing them up again on the side, in what used to be the furrows. Late millet and sorghum, which after the bulrush-millet harvest had been left growing from the flanks of mounds or ridges, are thus transferred to the new position, in the furrows between the new ridges. The *sa wo gi* is a delicate operation which may easily damage the growing plant. When it is carried out the original mounds are already much reduced in size by the rains, and when they have been shifted they have the appearance much more of long ridges than of separate mounds. The shifting of the ridges besides weeding the maturing plant provides fresh surface soil for the new ridges, which are then left, all prepared, for the next planting season.

The fourth weeding, called *sun ya* ('pulling out'), consists mainly in a thinning out and at the same time transplanting of late millet and sorghum. It is carried out four or five months after sowing, when sorghum is about 4 feet high. From the eight to ten shoots which grow from the seed about half are pulled out, their leaves are cut and the shoots transplanted either to a separate plot, if sufficient farm space is available, or to additional ridges thrown up along the edges of the original plot. Another method is to interplant the shoots through the original ridges or mounds, which in this case have been spaced specially wide apart. The transplanted shoots soon surpass the mother-plant in growth. The rice planters in the river marshes, I may add, who cultivate the late maturing variety, also practise thinning out and transplanting, three months after sowing.

An operation somewhat akin to the 'shifting of the ridges', which, in fact, is often referred to by the people as a 'fourth hoeing', is the *sa ci wo*, the

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

'making yam mounds'. Many farmers will try to prepare their new yam plots soon after the yam harvest, or at any rate before the beginning of the dry season.[1] They clear new plots, throw up the mounds, and plant the yams at once, thus having everything prepared for next year. In Nupe opinion one obtains bigger yams if one follows this practice, plants yam early, and leaves the seed yam in the ground through the whole dry season.[2]

The early preparation of ridges or mounds offers, on the other hand, two very concrete advantages: first, it means comparatively easy work, carried out as it is in the soft soil; second, it enables the farmer to start his planting without further delay as soon as the rains break. In the case of yam, particularly, this early planting removes one difficult crop from the already crowded time-table of sowing and planting.

Reaping and Harvesting

Our description of the agricultural activities of the year has taken us to the second phase in the farming cycle: harvesting. A fortnight after the harvest of bulrush-millet, following closely upon the third weeding, the first yam crop is dug up, and shortly afterwards the first ground-nut crop. There are two yam harvests. In July the farmers dig out yam for the first time, cutting one tuber from the plant and leaving the rest in the ground to sprout farther. This young yam is considered a delicacy; unlike the late yam it is eaten 'mashed'. Only a little of it is sold; most of it is consumed by the household. The fresh yam, however, lasts only a short time; the second yam harvest, in October–November, is the main harvest, at which the remaining tubers (three or four in each mound) are dug out.[3] Ground-nuts, too, are harvested twice. The first ground-nut crop is dug out between mid-July and the end of August, and used for food only; the second ground-nut crop, dug out between the end of December and the end of January—a much drier crop than the first—is used exclusively for sale to the European trading companies.

There is hardly any pause between the end of the first yam harvest and the fourth and last weeding. After this, however—it is by then the end of August or beginning of September—there is a certain lull in the farming activities, at least if the time-table has been kept fairly strictly. Till the next big item on the list, the second yam harvest, the farmer can enjoy a short respite of three or four weeks, during which he can take his work more leisurely. Even so, he remains fully occupied: he is still going regularly to the farm to clear away leaves and brushwood; those who have planted rice or sweet potatoes as additional crops harvest them now; the women pick the melons which have been interplanted with yam or corn. Certain farmers who were pressed for time earlier in the year have postponed the important third weeding until now. The lull continues to some extent after the second yam harvest. Now is the time

[1] In Bida this operation is often postponed till January or February.

[2] I cannot say how far this opinion is substantiated by fact. Agricultural officers whom I consulted on this question were unable either to confirm or to refute this native theory.

[3] In Leaba, in the extreme north of Nupe, i.e. close to the line which marks the northern boundary of yam cultivation, yam is harvested only once.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

when 'keen' farmers prepare the yam plots for the next year, and re-hoe the yam mounds into ridges to be ready for next year's planting. 241

The harvest of late millet, which falls in November, is the signal that the last 'rush-period' of the year has begun. Let me first describe the harvesting of millet—the method is the same for both millet varieties and for sorghum. The millet and sorghum varieties cultivated in Nupe grow to a height of 6–8 feet. To reap the corn, the stalks are broken and cut close to the ground, and then laid in bundles in the furrows, where they are left for from five to seven days to dry in the sun (an exception is bulrush-millet, which may have to be dried artificially). Afterwards the heads of the plants are cut off with the bush-knife and carried home in large bundles, 50–60 lb. in weight, while the stalks are left on the fields. These bundles, called *epa*, are the Nupe unit of reckoning for calculating the yield, and also the standard 'load' (*kara*) used in the marketing of unthreshed grain. [804]

The harvesting of late millet almost coincides with the beginning of the second ground-nut harvest. A fortnight or so later sorghum is brought in. Then follows in rapid succession, frequently overlapping, the picking of red pepper, cotton, and beans, while the ground-nut harvest is still going on. Lastly, grass on fallow farms is cut; when the last batches of ground-nuts are dug out, at the end of January, the agricultural cycle is completed.

Let us return for a moment to the harvesting of millet and sorghum. I have mentioned above that the dead stalks of millet and sorghum are left on the farms. Some of the stalks are retrieved after a fortnight, and used for mat-making (see p. 239). The rest, however, is left lying in the fields, till they are destroyed later in the 'burning of the farms'. The same applies to the stalks of maize, the cut-off vines of yam, and the leaves or stems of other plants. Thus the dead plants are allowed to rot on the fields, and fertilizing substance is washed into the soil by the rains which may fall in the weeks or months between the harvesting and the following dry season. This is the native system of 'green manuring' to which I have referred before. The Nupe are well aware of this effect, and say that these stalks and leaves *ẹe taki*, 'become dung'.

The time-factor in reaping and harvesting is less sharply defined than in sowing and planting. Harvesting activities are spread more irregularly over a longer space of time. Certain crops, e.g. yam, cotton, sweet potatoes, and rice, are harvested in stages as the individual plants or batches of plants mature. During the (first) yam harvest, for example, I saw the farmer open two mounds only to close them again, having discovered that the fruit inside was not yet ripe. Again, the picking of certain crops, e.g. ground-nuts, cotton, red pepper, and beans, is a very long-drawn-out operation. But it may be speeded up—and a quick harvest of the 'cash crops' (cotton and ground-nuts) may be an urgent necessity in times of financial stringency—if outside help can be enlisted. The picking of beans, which involves no such motives, is often left till the very last, and carried out leisurely by the family after all the other crops have been brought in.

The harvesting that falls in the middle of the agricultural season, on the other hand, must be carefully fitted into this schedule of farm-work.

I: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 For example, cassava and sweet potatoes grown on the marsh-land farms must be dug out quickly as rice is planted on the same plots almost immediately. The harvesting of bulrush-millet and the first yam harvest, if delayed, may interfere with the planting of cotton, and the third weeding. A quick harvest, for a different reason, is imperative also for late millet and sorghum; here it is the danger of monkeys and birds damaging the standing grain which forbids delay. The Nupe have various ways and means to combat this danger: they put up scarecrows and erect high platforms on the fields from the top of which boys try to scare off monkeys and birds, by shouting, throwing stones, brandishing long sticks, or swinging long ropes tied between the platform and a near-by tree. In districts where the danger is very great the farmers may have to spend the night on the farm shortly before the harvest to guard their fields from these unwelcome guests.

It is interesting to supplement this large-scale survey of the agricultural cycle with a view from closer range which could do justice to the varying individual arrangements. To illustrate this aspect of Nupe farming I have compiled the farming diaries of three Kutigi farmers for two typical weeks—one between the end of May and the beginning of June, when the work is temporarily easing off, and the second towards the end of June, when work is at its highest. These farming diaries show the scope of the individual variations of the general time-table. We shall see that they are fairly considerable—in details; but in general lines the activities of the three farmers conform closely to a common pattern. During the more leisurely season all farmers are ready to interrupt their work, and rest for two or three days in succession; but during the busy season only a very weighty reason will make them stay at home and leave their fields even for a day. Indeed at that time of the year you will find the Nupe villages deserted from early morning till about 3 or 4 in the afternoon, save for women, children, and old men. Another interesting fact emerging from the diaries is the disregard, under pressure of work, for the traditional day of rest, Friday. To work six days and rest on the seventh is a common practice in Nupe (in fact a practice said to have been common already in the times before the spreading of Mohammedanism). But a farmer who knows himself behindhand with his work will disregard the rule. Finally, we see that in labour groups consisting of several people the family head may sometimes enjoy a short rest while the young men carry on the work; or that if one of the workers is called away, for example, by some social obligation, the work of the group goes on unimpaired. An arrangement of this kind is evidently impossible in the case of the farmer *K.*, who works on his own.

[461]

N.	*M.*	*K.*
Labour group: father and three sons	*Labour group: father and one son*	*Labour group: one man*
31.5.1936		
Goes out to farm about 8 a.m. Eats midday meal on the farm, and returns about 4 p.m.	Goes out to farm together with *N.*, whose farm is close to his own. Also returns with him.	Is away from Kutigi; went to a neighbouring village for the funeral of his sister.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241

N.	*M.*	*K.*
Labour group: father and three sons	*Labour group: father and one son*	*Labour group: one man*
1.6.1936		
As previous day.	As previous day.	Returns in the evening.
2.6.1936		
Stays at home, together with sons.	Stays at home, and visits *N.* in the evening.	Goes out to farm about 10 a.m., and returns at 4 p.m.
3.6.1936		
Stays at home. Sons go out to farm in the morning, but are back at 2 p.m. in time to attend the market, which is held to-day.	Stays at home, works on garden-plots round the house. Son goes out to farm.	Stays at home; says he is tired from the journey.
4.6.1936		
Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns for midday meal; sons stay longer.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns after midday meal.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns after midday meal.
5.6.1936 (Friday)		
Stays at home, together with sons. Attends mosque in the afternoon.	Stays at home. Visits *N.* in the evening.	Stays at home. His brother, who lives in a hamlet, comes on a visit.
6.6.1936		
Stays at home, says he is tired. Works on garden-plots, but will go to farm to-morrow. Sons go out to farm.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns for midday meal.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns for midday meal.
22.6.1936		
Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns at 4 p.m. One son goes to Sakpe to attend wedding of a friend.	Goes out to farm at 7 a.m., returns after 4 p.m.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns after 4 p.m.
23.6.1936		
Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns for midday meal. He hurt his hand and cannot work properly. His sons stay on; one son still in Sakpe.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns for midday meal.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns after 4 p.m.
24.6.1936		
Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., but returns early as his hand hurts. Son who went to Sakpe returns in the evening.	Goes out to farm at 7 a.m., returns after 4 p.m.	Stays at home as he is tired and has stomach trouble.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241

	N.	*M.*	*K.*
	Labour group: father and three sons	*Labour group: father and one son*	*Labour group: one man*
	25.6.1936		
	Stays at home, his hand not yet well. Sons go out to farm.	Goes out to farm at 7 a.m., returns after 4 p.m.	Goes out to farm at 7 a.m., returns after 5 p.m.
	26.6.1936 (Friday)		
	Stays at home.	Stays at home.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns after 4 p.m.
	27.6.1936		
	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns at 5 p.m.	Goes out to farm at 8 a.m., returns after 4 p.m.	Goes out to farm at 7 a.m., returns for mid-day meal.
	28.6.1936		
	Stays at home because tax clerk of chief had summoned all elders. Sons go out to farm.	Stays at home for same reason as *N.* Son goes out to farm.	Goes out to farm at 7 a.m., but returns early to meet the tax clerk.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this chapter I have stressed the technical aspect of farming rather than its sociological context; I have laid particular emphasis on the time-factor. Nupe agriculture, complex and ambitious as is its scope, depends for its success on a very high degree of technical efficiency, both with regard to the organization of labour and individual skill and efficiency. The most conspicuous gauge of this efficiency lies in the successful use of the intricate and finely cut schedule of planting, weeding, and harvesting. This may not appear too easy: in Kutigi I learned—from the best farmers of the country—that the careful sowing of cotton may interfere with the second weeding, which is particularly important for late millet; this competition of two main crops for the attention of the farmer has often forced the planter to choose between them. Another complication in connexion with the growing of cotton is that the careful tending of cotton may hinder the yam harvest and the immediate preparation of the new yam-plots—an operation which appears preferable to many. But even the most rigid schedule of work must allow for a certain latitude. I have already given a few examples showing this. However, the essential point is that these deviations from the 'standard' times are recognized as such; there *is* a 'standard' schedule of farm-work and of its existence all farmers are equally aware, those who follow it as well as those who avail themselves of the latitude allowed in it. At every phase of farming operations a farmer will be able to tell whether or not he is 'on time'. The consciousness of the ideal time-table is clearly expressed in the common distinction between what 'good' and what 'bad' farmers do or are expected to do. The latitude which the ideal time-table allows carries its own corrective with it, be it merely

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

moral or of a more concrete order. Ground-nuts, for example, may be planted at any time between the end of April and the end of May; but the late planter, as all agree, will be 'late for the tax money'. In Bida I watched farmers making new ridges for millet-sorghum in a field that had been already under cultivation the previous year rather late in the season; when I asked why they did not use the 'shifted' ridges, they explained that they had not performed the 'shifting of the ridges' the previous year, adding rather apologetically that they, the Bida people, were not as keen and efficient farmers as the country people, who as they well knew would rarely omit that operation.

Thus there is at least a moral premium put on the keeping of the delicate time-table and the overcoming of its various difficulties. Pride in farming achievements, publicly recognized and applauded, becomes a stimulus for attaining that high degree of efficiency on which Nupe agricultural production depends in so high a measure. Its final compensation lies, of course, in the concrete success of its ambitious scheme. Well carried out, it promises to satisfy the nutritive as well as the commercial demands of the community.

Here we are brought back to the third of the three conditions which appear to determine the Nupe farmer's agricultural planning and his choice between different crops and systems of rotation, namely, the consideration of the return—adequate return—which he may expect from his cultivation. If in his efforts to combine the cultivation of a certain number of crops the cultivator must take into consideration the efficiency of the labour at his disposal, he must, conversely, also consider how far the exercise of that highly efficient labour organization, or its direction to a particular task, is warranted by the prospects of an adequate return. The role played by considerations of this nature in Nupe agricultural economy is shown in the following examples. In 1934, the year of the 'slump', the majority of farmers in the ground-nut-growing districts declined to dig out the second ground-nut crop of this year as no sales were possible and it seemed hardly worth while to undertake the long and (since outside help would have to be called in) expensive task without the prospect of monetary compensation. Again, in 1936, a far better year, I learned that a number of Bida farmers who for various reasons had to carry out their farming single-handed were selling their harvest of ground-nuts together with the seed ground-nuts which they ought to have kept for the next planting season. The explanation was that one man alone could not grow any quantity worth selling. What they did therefore was to grow ground-nuts every second year only, and to buy seed ground-nuts in the intervening year, thus concentrating their modest 'labour-organization' on food crops and commercial crops alternately.[1]

[1] In figures this calculation works out as follows in the case of one of my informants: to have sold ground-nuts exclusive of the seeds would have brought him 1*s.* 6*d.*; instead of which he sold the lot for 4*s.*, and bought back ground-nuts for seeds the next year, from profits made on mat-weaving, for 2*s.* 6*d.* This might not look a very convincing calculation to us, but one must realize that 4*s.* was almost half the tax money in his case (9*s.* 6*d.*), while a sum of 1*s.* 6*d.* would only have been a negligible contribution towards that most important expense.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 It is natural, though from a certain point of view unfortunate, that today examples of this kind will almost invariably refer to modern commercial crops. The consideration of 'adequate returns' is thus given a narrower, and very specific, meaning. It cannot be denied that the extensive cultivation of these modern crops has accentuated the element of economic calculation in Nupe agricultural planning. Not only has the introduction of these crops considerably complicated the planting schedule, but it has also immensely emphasized the monetary aspect of the question of adequate returns. The 'all-or-nothing' viewpoint, or in the language of the economist, the 'marginal' considerations, which our examples have revealed, are no doubt due to its influence. I have said that these modern influences have 'accentuated' the element of economic calculation—they have not introduced it for the first time. To be satisfied with what the Nupe call, by a stereotyped formula, farming 'for the mouth only' is characteristic only of those sections which practise agriculture on the most modest scale, as a secondary occupation in addition to a craft, a trade, &c. We shall learn presently that even in its original form, before modern economic influences were brought to bear on it, Nupe agricultural production included a large measure of production for marketing and exchange.

DISPOSAL OF CROPS

Storage

251 343 We find both storage on the farm and in the house. Yam, sweet potatoes, cassava, and in some places the portion of millet and sorghum meant for sale are stored on the farm, either in the small huts (*evu*) which serve the farmers as temporary shelters, or in special store-huts (*kpyakpya*) built of sticks and branches put up, tent-like, against a tree and covered with leaves or grass. Inside, the fruits are heaped on a raised platform. The yam fruits are stored whole, and the fruits needed for food or marketing are collected from time to time, about twice a week, mostly by the men. The storing arrangement in this stick-and-branches structure is adapted to the need of the root crops for a drier and more airy storage than the clay granaries in the houses could provide. As regards the grain crops intended for sale, they are stored in these huts only for a short time, being disposed of very soon after the harvest. In the districts where little yam is grown, especially in the country round Bida, all crops, including yam, are stored in the house. Of cassava only small quantities are stored; as fresh cassava does not keep, it is first dried in the sun. But as the harvesting of cassava is not bound to any special season it is frequently dug out and used for food at odd times throughout the year; often in fact, dug out and eaten raw, it serves as a convenient 'quick lunch' to the farmers while they are working in the fields.

In the granaries in the house are stored millet, sorghum, maize (so far as this crop, grown in small quantities, involves any special storing), beans, ground-nuts, and all greens, each crop being kept in a separate granary. These granaries, called *edo*, are distributed between the living huts of the compound. Of egg-like shape, about 7 feet high and 4 feet in

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

rice, and partly ground-nuts) or after it has undergone a rudimentary 'refining' process (such as the threshing and milling of grain, the shelling of ground-nuts, &c.). Side by side with this trade there exists an extensive local trade in the 'finished' product, which means various kinds of prepared food. I cannot attempt a detailed description of the intricate and varied art of Nupe cooking. I will only enumerate the more important products of this native 'food-industry', which, like most food preparation, is in the hands of the women. It is of considerable importance for the economy of the Nupe household. There are three main kinds of such prepared food which are sold everywhere in the markets and streets of the towns and villages of Nupe: (1) a gruel of millet or sorghum, made with water, and called *ekwa* in the more jelly-like and *zambú* in the more solid form. It is eaten for breakfast or lunch, and nicely done up in banana leaves, bought by labourers, canoe-men, travellers, and sometimes farmers going out to their fields—men who are unable to have their meals with their families or to have food brought out to them from home. (2) *Yisú* (Hausa, *fura*), bread-like balls made of late millet or sorghum and rolled in flour. Men and women attending markets are fond of buying this food and eating it with milk which they buy, there and then, from the Fulani women. (3) *Masa*, *kuli-kuli*, *bánkuru*, and *kara*—savouries of different kind, made of beans, sorghum- or millet-flour or ground-nuts, fried in shea-butter and prepared with various spices. They are eaten at any time of the day, practically by everybody who can spare an *anini* (a tenth of a penny).

To turn to the food crops proper. Our chart has established the even distribution of food crops over the year's cycle, a distribution which should, normally, leave every household well provided with food from harvest to harvest. Old yam should last till the new yam is dug out, sorghum and late millet till the new sorghum harvest—or at least till bulrush-millet—is reaped. I have found that June and July are the critical months: yam may begin to give out by the end of May or June, about six weeks or two months before the new yam harvest, and late millet and sorghum may become scarce by the middle of June. But bulrush-millet, which is harvested about that time, and maize, both from inland and marsh-land crops, make the transition easy.[1] So do also fresh ground-nuts, new potatoes, and partly the new rice, all harvested before the late main crops; I have mentioned already the 'stopgap' character of cassava.[2] A dry year, a late or failing harvest of early millet or first yam, may, of course, upset the balance temporarily in a district—till imports from the river area where yam matures earlier, or other districts which have fared better, set it right again.[3] But the nutritive balance of the country must always remain dependent on the contribution of trade and markets:

[1] See p. 213.

[2] Cassava-flour as a substitute for grain-flour appears on the Nupe markets only for about two months, during July and August. Corn-gruel, a daily food in many Nupe households, can be made with rice-flour instead of sorghum- or millet-flour, if the latter has become scarce. This substitute is more expensive than ordinary corn-gruel, and is also said to be less pleasant to the taste.

[3] In 1936 the first yams appeared on the river markets on 6 July, while inland the first yams were dug out a fortnight later.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

yam, maize, and early millet are not grown everywhere; special crops are cultivated on marsh-land and inland farms; and besides, there is the large population of Nupe which does not live on the land and can obtain its food only from the markets of the country. The Nupe agricultural system, as we have realized already, is adjusted essentially to a highly developed system of exchange and marketing. The surprisingly small number of crops grown exclusively for household consumption is perhaps the most striking proof.

The degree to which the individual farmer, and the farmer in the different districts of the country, adjusts his planting to the principle of exchange economy varies considerably. In the marshes of Niger and Kaduna almost the whole production of rice is intended for sale and export. But at the other end of the scale we find farmers who, able to cultivate a few crops only, have just enough to provide food for their families. We have already examined some of the conditions determining this changing balance between trade crops and food crops. Ultimately it only reflects that greater fundamental balance that underlies Nupe peasant economy: between the need of food for the group, and the need of commodities which are obtainable only by means of exchange, that is, money—which can itself be obtained only from the sale of farming produce.

TREE CULTIVATION AND FRUIT INDUSTRY

As stated in the first chapter, most of the fruit-bearing trees in Nupe are wild growing. Only two or three kinds are cultivated: the kola-nut tree, *ebi*, and to much lesser extent the banana, *yaba*; to these two indigenous plants we must add to-day the European imported mango tree, *mangoro*. In the case of trees the main productive activities refer therefore not so much to the planting and tending of the plants as to the collection of the fruits and the preliminary manufacturing process of the same order as that described in the preceding section. Only in a few cases can the fruits of the trees be utilized directly—for food, cooking, or marketing. Most fruits have to undergo a special 'refining' process before they become marketable or ready for use.

Banana

Only in Bida, Patigi, and Laboži did I see real banana plantations. They are small and of little importance, for bananas have little commercial value in Nupe; they are sold for an extremely low price (a bunch of about twenty for ½*d.* or less)—if they are sold at all. Bananas are eaten raw, and play in Nupe a part comparable to our occasional eating of fruit. In the banana plantations the plants are arranged in a circle of about 6 feet in diameter. The important thing is to plant them very deep in the ground (from 3 to 4 feet), and the whole circle has thus to be excavated to that depth. It is this heavy and slow work—unprofitable work from a commercial point of view—that, according to my informants, discourages the Nupe farmer from growing bananas. In Bida, where the soil is poor, the banana plot has to be manured with animal dung; in the bush plantations and in the forest groves where the banana grows wild the

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

easily turns into discouragement. In Kutigi and Sakpe I have spoken to many farmers who, discouraged by the increasing difficulties that appear to accompany cotton-growing, seemed determined to give it up altogether. We may, I think, draw a valuable lesson from this. If new agricultural schemes are to be introduced they must be brought in already well tried-out and fully adapted to the existing conditions. The adoption of a new crop or technique is to the native in itself a large-scale experiment; to make the people adopt a technique which has not been fully tried-out means to double this element of experimenting. It will prevent the new knowledge from being absorbed quickly in the 'body of Nupe farming-knowledge' on which the people feel they must be able to rely, and may eventually give them over to disappointment and discouragement.

BY-PRODUCTS OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and forest-cultivation produce as by-products certain raw materials which are used in Nupe home industries and handicrafts. Thus the grain-stalks which are left on the fields after the harvest are used for the making of fences, doors, and bedsteads: cut in fine strips, grain and maize stalks are used for mat-making; a vegetable dye, black and red, is gained from the stalk of a certain species of sorghum (*dindórogi*). Small trees which do not bear fruit are occasionally cut down by the owner of the field on which they stand and used as timber for house-repairs and suchlike. In all these cases it is the cultivator and his family themselves who use the plant or tree; the by-products of agriculture have no marketing value. This is different in the case of firewood and grass for thatching which, as I have mentioned already, is collected or cut by the Nupe women and marketed by the men (see p. 200).

It is frequently quoted as a characteristic feature of African agriculture that every part of a plant or tree that can be used in any way is actually utilized by the people. This is only partly true in Nupe. Only a small proportion, for example, of the grain-stalks is used in the various ways just described. A great many farmers are either unskilled in the craft which makes use of these by-products, or devote their spare time to other, to them more attractive or profitable, occupations. This comparative failure on the part of the Nupe farmer to utilize to the fullest possible extent the products of his land appears to be connected with the complexity and specialization of the productive system of the country. As we shall see later, only certain groups or individuals have specialized in mat-making, the making of bedsteads, or dyeing. The influence of specialization involving a clear-cut division between the agriculturist and the craftsman who utilizes the by-products of agriculture is most conspicuous in this case; big trees, when not fruit-bearing, may also be cut down and used as timber. But no farmer would ever attempt to cut a big tree himself for fear of bungling the job and being injured or even killed by the falling tree. He calls in the professional wood-cutter, who possesses both the necessary skill and experience and the special magic which alone can prevent the spirit of the tree from revenging himself on

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 463 the person who is destroying his abode. These big trees have a money-value, and are sold to the wood-cutters and carpenters, who use the timber in their own industry. On the whole the Nupe are reluctant to cut down big trees, especially in the town, for they appreciate the shade which they give. But it happens occasionally that the owner of a barren tree, in need of money, has it cut down and sells the timber to wood-cutters or carpenters.

185 651 322 In the interest of forest-preservation the felling of certain trees has been made subject to the payment of a licence fee varying in amount from 5*s.* 6*d.* to £1 or more. This new rule involves an economic re-adjustment which the people—professional timber-workers as well as ordinary farmers—have not yet been able to achieve. The carpenters of Bida almost went on strike when the new licence was introduced, and refused to manufacture any more wooden stools and other products of their craft for fear of being unable to sell their goods for the higher price which the licence would necessitate. Another illustration is the case of [672] an old man, a carpenter, who, unaware of the new rule, had bought a barren locust-bean tree in Bida for felling, for 7*s.* 6*d.* When he was requested to pay the licence fee of 5*s.* 6*d.* he was unable to do so. His case came before the Bida Court, but in consideration of his poverty and age the court reduced the licence fee for him to 1*s.* 4*d.* It is too early yet to say what effect this licence will have on the Nupe wood-working industry: whether it will lead to a technical readjustment and a change in the kind of timber used, or to a gradual deterioration and eventual disappearance of the indigenous wood-carving technique, which is already feeling the competition of the cheaper, and infinitely uglier, products in Western style: packing-case chairs and tables, deck-chairs, and the like.[1]

[323 325 171] [1] It is to be feared that it will be this latter case with which Nupe wood-carving will meet. In other crafts these changes in material and partly style are already an accomplished fact: thus the Bida glass-workers have almost completely abandoned making their own glass, and make their bangles and beads of smelted down bottle glass of European manufacture; similarly the Nupe blacksmiths buy cheap sheet-iron at the trading stores, and no longer smelt their own iron ore.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER XIII

AGRICULTURE: ORGANIZATION OF LABOUR

LABOUR organization in Nupe, in every field of economic activity, is characterized by a twofold principle: the distinction between individual work and family work or, in native terminology, between *bucá* and *efakó*. As the division of labour implied in this distinction also involves a corresponding division of income and property, our discussion of the organization of agricultural labour must at the same time be a discussion of the forms of property that obtain in relation to agricultural production. The terms *bucá* and *efakó* have, in fact, this wider meaning. Every kind of work done individually, its products and the income—individual income—derived from it, are *bucá*; and every work done jointly, in collective family work, producing output and income over which the family group or a section of the family group exercises joint rights, is *efakó*. Thus we find two different kinds of farm property: *efakó* farms which are owned and worked jointly by the family group, and *bucá* farms worked and owned by individuals. Similarly there are *efakó* granaries to hold the produce from the family farms, and *bucá* granaries to hold the produce which the individual members of the family group own and utilize. The family group or, more precisely, the section of the family group which forms the *efakó*-unit, owns from ten to twelve granaries which are as a rule placed close to the centre of the house. Every *bucá* owner has, besides, his own granary, which is usually found close to the wall of the compound. Obviously, in a system of labour based not on wages but on joint work and a share in the proceeds, the discussion of the labour organization cannot be treated separately from questions of ownership and land-tenure. On the other hand, a co-operative group consisting of a section of the kinship group cannot be described without constant reference to kinship organization. Frequent cross-references, and overlapping with other sections of the book, are thus unavoidable.

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY WORK

Let me begin with the *bucá*, which can be briefly described. Every male member of the family owns a *bucá*, with the exception of the family head who being the administrator of the *efakó* has no *bucá* himself. For his personal requirements he is entitled to draw on the *efakó* income. Young boys of 8 or 10 already possess *bucá* farms of their own. *Bucá* farms vary considerably in size, and grow with their occupants. The largest *bucá* farm which I found was about one acre, i.e. about half the size of the plot of land which on the family possessions is proportionate to every adult worker. The average *bucá* yield I found to be between one-third and one-half of the individual adult's share in the yield of the family farm. The *bucá* owner can work on his farm only 'out of business hours', when he is not needed for *efakó*

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

244
592

work. Two different arrangements exist. The one found more frequently is this: every man works on the *efakó* farm from early morning till 3 or 4 in the afternoon; after that he is free to work his own individual plot. The second, less frequent, arrangement requires married men to work five days in the week, and bachelors six days in the week on the *efakó*, and allows them one or two days—including the weekly day of rest, Friday—on the *bucá*. The selection of crops which are grown on the *bucá* is of necessity very much simpler than that grown on the *efakó*; moreover, no collective work, not even occasional help, is possible for *bucá* work. Thus farmers grow mostly only the staple crops, sorghum, millet, or yam, on their *bucá* farms but sometimes, though rarely, also cotton or ground-nuts. The income from the *bucá* farm is used entirely for personal expenses, for clothes and additional food which are not provided by the family, such as savouries or kola-nuts, beer or palm-wine; for contributions to parties of friends, certain personal gifts, and so forth.

Bucá farm-work is not practised everywhere, and not even in every farming community. *Bucá* work and income of some kind, however, always exists. In certain areas where other forms of production (e.g. certain handicrafts) are practised besides agriculture—mostly forms of production involving less heavy work and higher money-return—these additional productive techniques supply the *bucá* work to which the men turn 'after hours'. Thus we find in Kutigi, the centre of Nupe mat-industry, mat-working adopted as *bucá*; in Mokwa, indigo-dyeing; while on Jebba Island, which is inhabited by the mixed farming and fishing community of the riverain Gbedegi, fishing with the drag-net (carried out in the evenings, i.e. after the day's farm-work) replacing the farming *bucá*.

The joint work on the *efakó* farm is carried out by a section of the household group, i.e. by a section of the family group which lives together in the same 'house' or compound. Only once have I found an *efakó* group comprising individuals who were living in different compounds. It was a transitional arrangement which had occurred in the course of the expansion of one household group, a section of which had split off and was preparing to take new land, farther afield, under cultivation. The 'emigrants' had already built a house in the new locality but were still, for the time being, working with the rest of the original household group on the old land. The whole household group, with its twenty-five to thirty male members, has most probably never formed a single *efakó* group, although informants, here as in so many cases only too ready to idealize the past, will often give exaggerated accounts of the size of the groups that formerly used to work together. Their estimates vary widely, between thirty and a hundred. However, even reliable informants put the size of the *efakó* group in pre-British days at a figure considerably higher than that observed to-day, namely, at from ten to fifteen. The average *efakó* group to-day numbers only two or three adult members. There is no doubt, then, and this is borne out by the evidence of genealogies, that the size of the *efakó* group has been steadily decreasing for some time. These are the figures relating to

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241
592

the size of the *efakó* working group in the case of fifty Nupe households which I have analysed (non-adult members of the working group are ignored in the table):

Number of men working together .	1	2	3	4	5	6	Over 6
Number of cases	17	13	11	6	2	1	..[1]

The smallest *efakó* group, of one man, has obviously lost all the essential characteristics which distinguish it from the *bucá* group. In these extreme cases the *bucá* itself disappears, and we have single individual holdings, worked by one man, helped only perhaps by his boys who will stay with him until they are grown up, when they too will demand farms of their own.

The normal *efakó* group consists of a number of close relations—brothers and sons who are either unmarried or only recently married, and have one or two small children—working under the headship of the senior man, a father, father's brother, or eldest brother. Older men who are childless may also remain in the *efakó* group. In larger *efakó* groups and especially in groups the head of which is an old man, the family head may not himself join in the actual farm-work. He supervises it, he makes frequent tours of inspection to the farm, and he lays down the arrangement and order of the work for the day. As a family head he stands more aloof, and is free to use his leisure in his own way. The team-work which the *efakó* implies is of two kinds: actual working together, or co-ordinated working on different plots performing different tasks. Actual working together on the same plot is practised in the tilling of the soil and the preparation of ridges, in transplanting and harvesting. In this team-work a strong stimulus is embodied: the more experienced workers set the pace, and the others follow as well as they can, always conscious of the element of competition and display of efficiency embodied in the joint activity. The leader of the team is not, as we have seen, the head of the *efakó* group himself but the member next in seniority, in the traditional arrangement usually the younger brother or eldest son of the family head. Sowing, ordinary weeding, and the regular tending of the plants may be done by one or two workers of the group only, while the rest may be assigned tasks on other plots or sometimes a different kind of work altogether, such as the task of helping in the house, or taking farm-produce to a distant market.

Whatever the actual division of work, the consciousness of the individual share in the common labour is strongly pronounced, and with it the competitive element in the co-operation. Every co-worker in the team is aware of the number of ridges, for example, which stand to his credit in the common tilling; similarly everyone, at least among the adults, is able to describe precisely his share in the yield produced on the

[1] The proportion of *efakó* groups comprising more than four adults is in reality much smaller than is indicated in the table. A more superficial census of over 100 households, designed specially to ascertain the occurrence of large *efakó* groups, produced the same three instances of households with *efakó*-units of five or six adults.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 592

common land. The system of individual *bucd* work which runs parallel to the family work no doubt fosters such reckoning; no doubt also that this form of reckoning, essentially competitive as it is, must enhance the energy devoted by the individual worker to the common task. But such an attitude must also foster the tendency to split up and eventually dissolve the working-unit. In a small hamlet near Bida I discovered an interesting form of transition between full co-operation, which yet recognizes the individual share in the common work, and complete dissolution of the working-unit into independent agents. In the case to which I am referring the *efakó* group was divided into two working-units, each being engaged permanently on different fields although the yield produced by the two sections was still collected as the common *efakó* yield. The *efakó* group was formed by a father—a man of over 50—and his two married sons—of about 25 and 30. The father was working one group of plots and the two sons, together, another. The two groups of plots incidentally produced equally large crops, which was due to the fact that the old man could enlist outside labour on his farms and thus equalize the difference in working capacity between himself and his two sons.

MAINTENANCE OF LABOUR

The produce of the *efakó* is handed over *in toto* to the family head. It is stored in the *efakó* granaries, and only the family head has the right to dispose of it. We shall discuss later in detail the various uses to which he may put it. But let me describe here one aspect of the employment of the *efakó* income, namely its use for the benefit of the *efakó* members themselves who helped to produce it, speaking more generally, for the maintenance of the labour organization. The question of maintenance of labour has, first, a strictly material aspect, namely, the supply of the means of production—the agricultural tools. The main agricultural instruments used in Nupe farming, as we have seen, are two kinds of hoe, bush-knife, and axe. They all have to be bought from the blacksmiths or, in the case of the bush-knife, from the European store, and must be repaired periodically—expenses which are by no means negligible. A heavy hoe costs between 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.*, a light hoe between 6*d.* and 1*s.*, axe and bush-knife between 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.*; repairs may amount to between 3*d.* and 4*d.* each time, that is, perhaps 1*s.* a year. Now, as long as the individual worker remains in the *efakó* group, the head of the group supplies new tools and pays for repairs. A man who leaves the *efakó* group to work on his own may take away the tools which he has been using—they have become 'his' tools—but from now on he must himself pay the cost of all repairs or the purchase of new tools.

435

The second, human, aspect in the problem of maintenance of labour is the maintenance of the workers themselves. They are housed, clothed, and fed by the family head. The head of the *efakó* group is responsible for all expenses that occur in connexion with the repair of the house and the huts in which his co-workers live; he provides their clothing and food—the section of the family group which is regularly

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

eating together and constitutes one *ménage* coincides in fact with the *efakó*-unit. The *efakó* head further pays the tax for his co-workers and is also expected to make himself responsible for establishing them socially when they have reached full adulthood, i.e. he will enable them to get married, by paying their bride-price. By allotting to the co-workers from earliest youth an individual plot for *bucá* work or allowing them the time for other *bucá* enterprises, he also puts them in the position of earning an independent income. They use it, as I have said, for their personal wants over and above those catered for by the family head—what we may call the small luxuries of life. When they desire to leave the *efakó* group and set up for themselves the family head finally provides the members of his group with the necessary 'capital' in the form of the tools which they may take with them, food for the first year while their new land does not yet bear crops, and, above all, in form of the parcel of family land which he allots to them as their own property. In order to do all this the family head must be able not only to draw on regular supplies of agricultural produce from the family land but also to avail himself of certain commodities of exchange and that universal medium of exchange, money. He must plan his money expenditure and accumulate reserves which can alone enable him to pay the large bride-price (which is always in money) when the time comes. The resources of the family working-unit thus gain the significance of capital proper, invested in the maintenance of labour; without it, without the prospect of fulfilling all these economic obligations towards the members of the working-unit, the *efakó* group cannot be maintained satisfactorily.

Here we come back to the decline or disintegration of the family working-unit under modern conditions which we have outlined in the beginning of this section. Now, every co-operative group must to some extent reckon with a periodical and temporary disintegration, that is, with the necessity of periodically readjusting its body of workers, replacing those who have died or are too old or who for other reasons desire to leave the group and to admit new, young members in their place. This is done through the twofold mechanism of inheritance and succession, and of release with regard to members who leave the group to work on their own. We shall examine inheritance and succession later; here it will suffice to say that in the Nupe system of inheritance the family farm goes to the relation next in seniority, younger brother or eldest son (in the classificatory sense). As regards the release of members from the group, the rule used to be that junior members remained in the *efakó* until they had more than two wives and more than two or three children. In the last five to ten years, however, many large *efakó* groups were dissolved after the death of the family head, and the family land, instead of being worked jointly by the remaining members of the family under the new head, was divided up among the various individuals who now work independently each on his own land. Moreover, nowadays young men who have just married frequently decline to stay in the *efakó*-unit and demand to be given a separate farm. I have noted many cases of this kind, in all parts of Nupe, in which the dissolution of the *efakó* group occurred between six and ten years ago.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 592 178

How are we to explain this comparatively sudden change? Viewing it from the general economic point of view all the advantages seem to be on the side of a large labour-unit: our discussion of the agricultural technique of the country has taught us that a large labour group represents, in Nupe, the only means of cultivating a large variety of both useful and profitable crops. Moreover, a large *efakó*-unit assures a certain measure of leisure to the family head and the old men in general, by enabling them to leave a large proportion of the actual work to the younger generation. It assures also a better distribution of responsibility, counting more adults among its members than does the small working-unit. It utilizes more fully the important incentive of competition and is, finally, of great educational value; for only in large labour-units are the young boys likely to work regularly in the company of others of their own age.

241 592 178 461

But if from point of view of group efficiency and security the large working-unit appears superior to the small (say) one- or two-men 'group', it is not necessarily so when looked at from the viewpoint of the individual. Take the question of leisure and distribution of responsibility. In one of the instances in which I found a large *efakó*-unit having been dissolved recently (six years ago), after the death of the family head, I was given this as the reason of the change: the new family head, the eldest of five brothers, had availed himself liberally of the privilege of leisure which his position implied, and frequently went hunting while the others were working on the farm. Now, while they had accepted the same arrangement under the old family head, their father, they declined to accord this privilege to their eldest brother, and preferred to dissolve the whole unit and work each for himself. To-day, working on their own, the individual family members have a comparatively larger measure of freedom and leisure, which they are free to use as they like. They can use their own discretion in planning the farm-work: of the five brothers two have taken to spend their spare time in making mats, a leisure-time occupation which, they assured me, is financially very advantageous to them; one has left the village; and the family head himself can still spend part of his time in hunting. Against the considerations of group efficiency thus stand individual considerations of gain, which provide another, and in some respects very different, standard of appreciation by which to measure the value of the large labour-unit. The word 'gain' should not be understood in too narrow a sense. Freedom of movement, freedom to choose a different profession (we remember, for example, the openings which the political life of the capital offered to young men of adventurous spirit), even freedom to enjoy one's leisure independent of the dictates of family requirements—these spiritual values appear under certain circumstances as tempting to the younger generation as does the prospect of material gain.

The two standards of appreciation will coincide where the *efakó* group is in a position to guarantee the satisfaction of all needs and demands which the group-members might feel. Nupe family co-operation in farm-work, once apparently more satisfactorily adjusted, is now failing in this respect. This failure can be attributed to two different develop-

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

ments: to an increase in the needs and demands on the part of the individual members with which the system of family co-operation failed to cope; or to a decline in the efficiency of the group to maintain its former standards of maintenance. The Nupe *efakó* system has, in fact, failed on both accounts. As regards the first, a large variety of new needs and wants, temptations and values have spread, primarily from the town, and have begun to transform the original peasant culture; as regards the second, the family head is to-day frequently unable to meet out of the family income two financial demands which are regarded as essential to the *efakó* concept, the payment of the bride-price and the payment of tax for the individual members of the *efakó* group.

Certain of the influences which have thus led to the decline of the large working-unit are no doubt due to factors of modern culture change. Yet it would be wrong to regard the change in the structure of the working-unit merely as a result of the outside influence of culture contact. The structural change forms part of a much wider phenomenon; it is the result of an intrinsic economic development, namely, the readjustment between productive organization and needs existing in the society. If the change were due exclusively to culture contact we should expect to find the larger working-unit preserved only in backward, 'unsophisticated', districts. This is not the case. The table on p. 243 showed that three households out of fifty had working-units composed of more than four adults. Of these three households only one belongs to a backward area—the household of the chief of Doko. The two other examples come both from one of the most progressive places in Nupe, Lemu, and from a group of farmers who, as mentioned before, have but recently undertaken the cultivation of a new commercial crop, red pepper, to replace another commercial crop, ground-nuts, which had not proved an economic success. A large working group is essential to the cultivation of this new crop. In these two households the young men have remained in the *efakó*, content with their position, while the family head, in turn, is able to provide bride-price and tax-money. Here, then, culture contact so far from being responsible for the dissolution of the large working-unit has on the contrary supplied a type of production which enables the large working-unit to maintain itself; paradoxically, culture contact has placed the *efakó*-unit in a position to satisfy those very demands and needs which culture contact has newly imposed upon the society. However, these instances from Lemu are exceptional: neither in Mokwa, the centre of ground-nut cultivation, nor in Kutigi, where cotton is grown on a comparatively large scale, has the large *efakó* group survived. The exceptional cases which I have discovered are too few to warrant a more far-reaching, systematic explanation. Moreover, whereas in this case attractions and temptations appealing to the younger generation are partly responsible for the social change, individual differences must play a considerable part. We can only tentatively point to a certain negative evidence: the absence of some of these 'temptations' in Lemu which have made the younger generation in Mokwa and Kutigi claim an early economic independence. Lemu is neither a centre of native trade, nor does a profitable alternative

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 592 178

occupation to farm-work (e.g. a handicraft, carried out in one's leisure-time) exist there, nor, finally, has its connexion with the political life of the town ever been as strong as in those other places.

COLLECTIVE LABOUR

241 476

The co-operation of the *efakó* group is more or less regularly supplemented by a system of mutual assistance and large-scale collective labour among the villagers, an institution which the Nupe have in common with all other Nigerian tribes. Its help is enlisted in all cases in which the *efakó* group by itself would be insufficient to secure efficient cultivation —be it because of its smallness, or an unforeseen obstacle such as illness among its members, or irregular rains,[1] or simply because its ambitious programme demands larger co-operation than is at its disposal. The Nupe have two systems of collective labour devised to operate in different situations: *egbe* (the Hausa *gaya*) and *dzolo*.

The *egbe* is the more general type of collective labour. It is not limited to farm-work, but is organized for every kind of work which demands large-scale co-operation and specially for work done, not for one household alone, but for the community at large. Thus the building or roofing of a big house, for example the chief's house, repairs of a bush-bridge or a stretch of road which is maintained by the village, are carried out in *egbe* work; repairs of the town wall, formerly, and repairs of the building of a Native Administration rest-house, to-day, are equally typical occasions for the *egbe*. However, in Bida and in many larger places a large proportion of work of this kind has now been taken over by professional labour. But in Bida as well as in the hinterland farm *egbe* is still practised regularly.

561 476 241

The help of *egbe* for farming is enlisted mostly for tilling and the first and second weeding, more rarely for the third weeding and the clearing of new yam-plots. A few days before the *egbe* is to take place the young men of the family go round to their friends and neighbours and invite them to the *egbe* on such and such a day. *Egbe* work is on the whole work for the younger people. A ready frame for their co-operation exists in the age-grade associations of which all the young men of a district are members. As they arrange throughout the year meetings and feasts in which they all join, they now organize the collective farm-work for one of their fellow member's family. The family head sends out a special invitation to drummers and musicians to play at the *egbe*. The accompaniment of music plays a very important part. Finally, the host prepares food and beer for the feast with which the *egbe* invariably ends.

[533]

Early in the morning drummers and flute-players walk out to the farm on which the *egbe* is to take place. They play and sing while they walk, beating on their drums the characteristic rhythm of *egbe* music, and everyone who meets them knows at once their destination. Some of the

[1] I once witnessed a third weeding carried out by collective labour in September, after an unexpected dry spell. The farmer explained to me that if the rains had been normal and ordinary farm-work not delayed, he would have carried out the third weeding in ordinary family work.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241
291

EFAKÓ WORK ON A FARM NEAR BIDA

FARMING *EGBE*

[FACING p. 248]

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

working party follow the musicians, the rest meet later out on the farm. When all have assembled the young men start work. They work in a group of ten or twelve, starting on the same side of the field, leaving plenty of space between each other. Everyone is working his own ridge and, having finished one, he turns to the next with hardly any pause. The drummers and flute-players walk alongside the field abreast of the workers. Older men stand at the side, watching, criticizing, commenting. Often you can hear them call one of the workers by name, exhorting him to ever greater efforts, or shouting impatiently: 'Quicker, quicker!' When one field is finished some of the young men, the captains of the age-grade association among them, will execute a short dance, balancing their heavy hoes in the air and heavily stamping on the tilled field, while the drummers are arrayed behind them, beating the rhythm of the age-grade *take*.[1] Then workers and audience—and every *egbe* attracts a large audience—move on to another field, while some of the older men may stay behind to sow the newly tilled plot. On another occasion I saw the young men working in two groups of about equal strength, each under its own leader—one of the captains of the age-grade association. The groups started on opposite ends of the field, working towards each other. Now and again a worker would get up, survey with one glance the work which his group had been doing, and cry out in a long high-pitched yell; others were shouting with deep hoarse voices at every stroke of their hoe. The speed with which they worked, the whole atmosphere of the *egbe*—the constant drumming, the shouts from the audience—had something deeply exciting, almost feverish. I have seen a team of fifteen young men, the oldest between 19 and 20, the youngest 14, clear and till a farm-plot of one acre in two and a half hours.[2] The *egbe* work still more than *efakó* work is animated by an intense spirit of competition. The worker who has quickly finished his ridges will stand up and look round, proudly showing off his splendid work; he will chaff his fellow workers about their clumsy progress, their crooked ridges; he executes a little dance, singing, and shaking his hoe to show how leisurely he can work and still beat the others. When all the work is finished the whole party, musicians, workers, and onlookers, repair to the house of the owner of the farm. Here the feast which concludes the *egbe* is celebrated with plenty of food, corn-beer, and dancing, and much boasting and prancing of the young men, who are the heroes of the occasion. Nor is their boasting and prancing without significance. In the village communities where the traditional age-grade system is still practised, one of the important side-issues of the *egbe* is that it represents a regular test in which the young men establish their qualification as farmers. From *egbe* to *egbe*, every year, their skill and their achievements are watched, compared, and judged by the older people. In the last *egbe* of the season, or some other outstanding *egbe* (e.g. on the farm of the chief),[3] the results of this competition are made known and the young

[1] See p. 395.

[2] In another case I saw six young men clearing a densely overgrown bush-plot for yam-cultivation of about a third of an acre in one hour.

[3] An *egbe* of this kind near Bida at which new titles were bestowed was

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

561 476 241 534

farmer who did best is given by his age-grade association the title *Sode*, the second highest title that can be bestowed on young men. A man who is once made *Sode* keeps his rank until some other claimant snatches the title from him, or if he had no competitors, until he joins the 'old men' and retires from the arena of the *egbe*. In the urbanized age-grade associations of Bida this title and the whole usage have disappeared. In other large places which follow Bida fashion, the title *Sode*, though still in existence, has become a title of minor importance, a long way down the list of age-grade ranks.

241 476

The primary advantage of collective farm-work lies evidently in the time-saving which it makes possible. The second weeding, for example, which normally takes from five to ten days, can be done by *egbe* in one day. But this valuable help must be paid for. The cost of an *egbe* of from fifteen to twenty workers—the cost of food and drink for the guests and the pay of drummers and musicians—is between 6*s*. and 8*s*. *Egbe* work, then, implies a calculation of investment and return, cost and profit. To-day, farmers try to lower the cost of *egbe*. In an *egbe* near Bida (the *egbe* just described, in which the workers were grouped in two teams) the owner of the farm contributed music and food for thirty people, but no beer or palm-wine. The fare was simple—no meat or fish—but plentiful: porridge cooked in palm-oil for the men, half a bowl per head (1 lb.), and corn-gruel for the women. This cheap *egbe* cost only 4*s*. yet proved still sufficiently attractive to make a large group of workers attend.

Yet there is one element of 'profit' in this calculation which cannot be put down in shillings and pence, and which is of utmost sociological significance. *Egbe* work is performed only on family farms, i.e. on the farms of family heads and old men in general. Younger people, whether they still work under the family head or have made themselves independent, are not entitled to the help of the *egbe*. Thus the *egbe* provides a twofold balance, in favour of the old men who cannot work as efficiently as the young, and in favour of the sociological head of the family group who, though perhaps no longer able to command the services of a large body of co-workers, can still command the assistance of collective farm-work.[1] How real this balance is was illustrated in the example given before (p. 244) of an old man, the family head, cultivating fields equal in size and yield to the fields worked by his two adult sons. With the splitting-up of families and the reduction of the *efakó* group, with the disappearance, that is, of the clear-cut distinction between family and individual farms, the significance of the *egbe*, too, must weaken. Information gained from a large number of independent witnesses testifies to the gradual loss of importance of *egbe* work in Nupe productive life. Once practised regularly on every farm it has now been

performed on the new experimental farm of the Agricultural Department which was tilled in collective work.

[1] Recognition of this privileged position of the sociological head of the group in a wider sense is expressed in the traditional rule, still valid in most peasant communities in Nupe, that the first *egbe* of the season is performed on the chief's land.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942,
FF52 Nupe FF52

reduced to a system of merely occasional assistance. According to my informants the change is due primarily to the high cost of the *egbe*, which to-day few farmers can afford. This is no doubt true if we understand 'cost' in the relative and not in the absolute sense. In the very closely balanced budget with which most Nupe farmers must reckon to-day the comparatively large single outlay for the *egbe* may prove an insuperable difficulty. But this is not the whole picture. A cost is high only measured on the profit it can realize. And here we have seen that one of the most essential kinds of profit—moral profit—which the *egbe* can realize, namely, its assurance of the economic balance between the generations, has itself lost much of its significance in the life of the community.

The second type of collective work, the *dzolo*, is less important than the *egbe*. It is practised only for harvesting of those crops which demand a large working team (ground-nuts, cotton, and beans) and consists in the arrangement among a number of farmers to work in turn on each other's farms. The host provides the meal after the work. But there is no drumming or dancing, nor is any competition involved in the work of the *dzolo*. Neither is the mechanism of the age-grade associations utilized for this collective work, which is carried out on a much smaller scale than the *egbe*, and only between friends, i.e. families whose heads are friendly with one another. In the *dzolo* the tie of friendship evidently supplies that incentive to collective work which, in the *egbe*, is entrusted to the appeal of music and dance and the stimulus of competition.

WAGE-LABOUR

Assistance in farm-work by means of paid labour plays on the whole (we must add as yet) an insignificant part in Nupe production at large. It is called *kantsú* in Nupe but is often referred to by the Hausa name *lada*, i.e. wages. It is employed by the owners of farms who are not themselves farmers or who for other reasons cannot themselves look after their land. Paid farm-labour is a new thing in Nupe. It has no place in the traditional system of land-tenure and *efakó* work. Characteristically, it is almost completely absent in the rural districts; it is employed mostly in the large commercial centres in which a considerable proportion of the population belongs to the well-to-do 'professional classes', such as Kacha, Jebba, and, above all, Bida.[1] Let me give you a list of the cases I recorded in which wage farm-labour was employed. The employers were a number of traders in Kacha who had bought some land a few years ago but did not work it themselves; a number of traders in Bida; two Mallams in Bida; a Mallam in Jebba whose health did not allow him to work on the land (he was employing wage-labour for the first time); Native Administration officials in Bida—a few policemen, and teachers at the Bida Middle School; and lastly, the village chief of Kacha (who is at the same time District Head) whose time is taken up by official

[1] One of my Bida informants, himself a well-to-do member of the 'intelligentsia', estimated that six out of ten farmers in Bida employ wage-labour. Though I should regard this estimate as much too high it is significant for the outlook of the urban *bourgeoisie*.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 work, and whose relations also assist him in this work as messengers and the like.

464 The labourers are all young men, mostly the sons of farmers, but occasionally also sons of impoverished *bourgeois* families (one of the labourers on my list was the son of a Mallam, another the son of a Bida *saraki*). Some labourers come from far away to the place where they expect to find employment: thus I found a young man from Lapai working in Jebba, and one from Bida working in Ilorin. Their working day is from early morning till about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, that is, the normal working day of the *efakó* worker. They get 2*d*. or 3*d*. a day and food; they work mostly for from four to ten days, some for a longer period, till they have collected a substantial sum of money. In no case has wage-labour in Nupe become a permanent, exclusive occupation. These young men seek only temporary employment and return after or in between their engagements to the family farm, where they carry on with the ordinary work of the season. Even a temporary absence of this kind may, of course, render the management of the family farm difficult and even precarious. For instance, the labourer from Lapai whom I have just mentioned, was working in Jebba as late as June, and could not return home before July when all the early planting and weeding would be completed. However, the need of money seems to outweigh all other objections. The main motive in undertaking wage-labour is invariably to obtain money for tax—either for oneself or as contribution to the parental household; next in importance is the motive to obtain money for bride-price.

It must be said in conclusion that though wage-labour represents a comparatively recent growth in Nupe society, the situation which created the need of wage-labour is not. Nor is the system of employed, i.e. non-family, labour the product of a recent development. Part of the social stratification of Nupe was, as we have seen, the creation of an upper class which owned land but did not work it. The labour which this class had to employ was of three kinds: slave labour, the labour of pawns, and, to a lesser extent, of clients. The first and the last kind of employed labour, both involving a social and political significance far beyond the aspect of labour, we have discussed already in a previous section. The second kind—labour of pawns—we will discuss later when analysing the concept of wealth.

DIVISION OF LABOUR BETWEEN THE SEXES (1)

462 The role which the women play in the agricultural production of the country lends itself to a simple formula. With very few exceptions the women do not perform any primary productive activity: they do no farm-work; they do not help in cultivation except occasionally when assisting the men in the harvesting of cotton or beans or the digging out of cassava—the easiest crop of all. Their sphere of work is, first, the 'refining' of agricultural produce to make it marketable, and secondly, the marketing itself. If the general formula is simple, the details of the division between 'primary' and 'secondary' productive activities, one

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

large proportion of the produce, or selling it in a hurry, at unfavourable prices.

From nutritive wants we proceed to the wants involved in the 'primary need' of shelter. The upkeep or building of houses represents a want which, occurring at much longer and more irregular intervals, does not figure conspicuously in the annual household budget. In the village, upkeep and building of houses is mainly a question of co-operative labour, involving little or no money outlay. Smaller house repairs, above all thatching, become necessary every three to five years; more complete repairs, such as rebuilding of huts or of the compound wall, are reckoned to occur every ten to twelve years. The small repairs are carried out by the household group, and take rarely more than two or three days. For larger repairs the help of neighbours and relations must be enlisted on *egbe* scale; they last much longer, according to the body of workers that can be mustered, and the work may often have to be interrupted for a day or two if the workers have other tasks in hand. Most building work in the village is left till the beginning of the rains, when the ground (from which the clay for building is dug) is soft, the grass for thatching not too dry (such grass is said to last less long), and when the people are still free from more exigent farm-work. We may add that the building of more elaborate houses of the kind that is found in the town and also in certain villages entails the employment of expert labour, and thus money expenditure, which varies widely with the style and scale of the work.

Finally, we add the 'derived wants' involved in agricultural production. Under this heading we include repairs and purchase of tools and the financing of *egbe* work. In the same category falls the payment of a fixed land rent in kind which obtains in the area round Bida (as in our example C). I have only partly been able to include these wants in the household budgets. However, the widespread efforts to economize, for example, on the cost of *egbe* work, or the neglected appearance of many of the sumptuous Bida houses, reveal the difficulties which many households find to-day in coping with these wants.

STANDARDS OF LIVING: CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

The next step in our inquiry is to ascertain the demands embodied in cultural standards which the Nupe peasant has to meet out of the surplus (if surplus there be) derived from his production. We can group these demands under three headings. (1) Demands implied in kinship duties. In so far as the household or kinship group coincides with the labour-unit these demands overlap with those we listed under 'maintenance of labour'. (2) Demands implied in duties towards the community—religious, political, or social. (3) Certain personal requirements which are regarded, by convention, as essential, and even indispensable.

Under the first heading we list the expenses of kinship ceremonies and feasts—the name-giving ceremony for a new-born child, wedding feasts, and burial and funeral ceremonies. These expenses are borne primarily

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

and commerce have greatly benefited from the new development, the position of the peasants and craftsmen has not improved to the extent of enabling them to accumulate reserves and increase their resources to any considerable extent. The introduction of commercial crops, the cultivation of which is officially encouraged, represents a policy designed to open to the native cultivator the way to economic betterment. Yet the insecurity of these new resources may defeat their own ends. A more recent move to improve the economic position of the farmers was the launching of a policy to introduce mixed farming into Bida Emirate. Mixed farming, which had been adopted some years previously in certain northern Emirates, was started in Nupe towards the end of my second expedition. At that time only the demonstration farms of the N.A. and certain stretches of land belonging to the Emir, all worked by wage-labour, had been put under the new cultivation. While it is thus too early to describe actual results, it is possible to outline, from the study of the underlying principles, certain probable effects of this agricultural policy on the economic and social system of the country. They are sufficiently far-reaching to warrant here a more extensive examination.[1]

This policy envisages a gradual transformation of the whole of Northern Nigeria into arable country cultivated on Western lines, on the basis of individual landholdings. The working team should consist of one man and a boy. The 2 acres per head which have hitherto corresponded to an individual worker would be extended to 12, and eventually to 20 acres. The manure gained from the draught cattle would do away with the necessity of shifting cultivation and would allow practically unlimited cultivation of the same stretch of land. A four-field scheme of rotation is suggested, with one field manured, and the following crops grown on the different fields: sorghum and millet (on the manured field); cotton; ground-nuts; cassava and small crops. The most prosperous farmers in a district are to be persuaded to take up mixed farming first, thus giving an example which, it is hoped, many others will soon follow. The total cost of the draught cattle (two bullocks and one cow) and plough is £7 for an iron, and £5 for a wooden, plough. Farmers who are unable to buy the equipment outright will be given an advance on future profits of £1 to £1. 10s., or can pay an 'entrance fee' of approximately that amount, being expected to pay the rest, viz. repay the advance, in four yearly instalments which include a hiring charge of 5 per cent. The greatly increased yield should make these payments easy: it has been calculated that the farmer will be able to increase his production eightfold by the new method.

The scheme, admirable though its intentions are, may easily be wrecked if certain inherent dangers and difficulties are not carefully considered. Let us take the example of the most prosperous and progressive farmers of Lemu whose landholdings we have examined in an earlier chapter (see p. 212). We found that the total land under cultivation in the case of a working group of five and three men was 9½ and 6 acres,

[1] I am greatly indebted to the Superintendent of Agriculture in Bida for having allowed me access to the departmental files on mixed farming.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

185
241

respectively. The larger group possessed one, the smaller two, fallow fields of the same size as the field under cultivation. Their total landholdings, including both cultivated and fallow fields, thus amounted to 18 and 19 acres. Now, under the new scheme one individual would take under cultivation very nearly the whole landholdings of the family group. The other adult members of the family will have to obtain new land or (only too probably) they will give up farming. In Trans-Kaduna, with its large land supplies, new land might be found with no great difficulty from vacant or virgin village land. But even under these favourable conditions the fourfold increase of landholdings entailed in this development must lead, if not to actual land shortage, to serious competition for land. For one thing, farm-land for ploughing should lie closer together than it does now. The Nupe farmers will soon find it profitable to exchange their scattered ½ acre or 1 acre fields for larger and compact areas, an exchange which, involving a discriminative appreciation of land, must invariably lead to land purchase and land sale. In Cis-Kaduna, with its limited land resources, land sales are, as we have seen, already practised on a small scale. Here, in the country of the big landowners, land purchase and land sale will increase rapidly under the new scheme.

The redistribution of land resources will go hand in hand with far-reaching changes in the economic stratification of the country. The prosperous peasant who was able to take advantage of the new scheme will in a few years' time command considerable resources. No doubt, the obvious way to invest the newly won capital will be in more ploughs and more land.[1] The more unfortunate farmers who, for reasons of poverty or lack of enterprise, are not able to avail themselves early of the new scheme will be hopelessly outdistanced by the rapid development. The increased agricultural production, of which a half will be for internal consumption, must lower the price of food crops in the country. The small farmer, who relies on food crops more than on commercial crops, will be compelled to sell his produce at a price so low that he may be unable to pay his tax or to maintain his labour costs. Sooner or later he will succumb to the temptation to sell or let his land to those who, having benefited from the new scheme, will be anxious to acquire new land, and he will be forced eventually into the position of a landless labourer on the farms of the new landowning class. The Emir, on whose estate mixed farming has been established first, will be foremost among the new landlords of the country.

The levelling-down of economic inequality which accompanied the establishment of British rule in Nigeria will thus be replaced by a new, much more defined stratification. Poverty in the present productive system of the country is due, as we have seen, mainly to inadequate labour (disregarding here the factors of land shortage and tax), that is, to such factors as age, illness, misfortune, or ill-planned labour-

[1] This is not a mere hypothesis. The tendency to accumulate land is already noticeable in the northern Emirates where mixed farming was introduced earlier, and has led more than once to official attempts to keep landed property within certain limits.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

organization, all of which—in theory at least—can easily be remedied. Poverty in the new scheme will be due to a fundamentally different inadequacy, the inability to secure the necessary means of production. It is a permanent, and even progressive, inadequacy, which must get worse with the continued process of production. For the same process that leads to accumulation of capital (in the modern sense of the word) in the hands of the owner of the adequate means of production will render more and more remote the chances of their acquisition by the people who are as yet without them. Economic inequality in its most extreme form, *latifundia* existing side by side with a landless proletariat, will be the final result.

These grave consequences can be avoided, and the valuable elements in the new policy saved, I think, by slowing-up the transformation of the agricultural system of the country until a corresponding transformation of the labour organization can be achieved. The increase in the cost of the means of production must be met by widening the basis of the co-operative unit which makes itself responsible for the maintenance of labour in this sense into co-operative societies. Co-operative societies, which could buy the new means of production from common funds, and would jointly own ploughs and cattle, would enable also the less prosperous farmer to profit from the technical improvements. A co-operative society which would include, for example, all the owners of adjacent fields would also be able to utilize ploughing to the fullest advantage without incurring the danger of large-scale land-exchange. The increase in the extent of cultivation would be gradual and well controlled, and the traditional labour-unit not rendered useless overnight; it would still be useful for supplementary farm-work (in the traditional fashion) at times when plough and cattle are employed on the field of a fellow member of the farm co-operative.[1]

RISK AND INSURANCE

Every productive organization must include in its calculations the factor of risk and insurance against risk. Certain risks are over and above the normal in that they are due to accidents outside the productive system itself, and beyond the range of foresight which the producers

[1] When I discussed this question in a lecture given at the Summer School for Colonial Studies in Oxford, in 1937 (see the *Summary of Lectures*), I was attacked by a member of the audience for attempting to 'boost poverty'. Now, this is a serious charge. However, I hope to have made it clear that my attempt was not towards fostering poverty or pampering backwardness, but towards avoiding a development which would create, and make permanent, the most dangerous form of poverty and economic dependence. To organize the less prosperous so that they should not be left behind in economic progress does in no way imply putting obstacles in the way of the more enterprising. 'The rich', as the chairman, who came to my assistance in the discussion, put it, 'will look after themselves.' It is interesting to note in this connexion that when mixed farming was discussed at the Residents' Conference in 1936 one Resident suggested that it might be feasible to utilize the Hausa *gaya* (collective farm-work) for the new agricultural organization. I presume that he, too, had in mind a co-operative organization of the kind suggested above.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

General

105 Most of the Nupe participate in a complex exchange-economy. Before the introduction of British money, cowrie shells were used as currency and are still used at funerals, and in reckoning marriage and other traditional payments.

The trans-Kaduna area and the country north of Bida (e.g., in Lemu), where land is fertile and plentiful, is the most prosperous. Wealth is greater where the household has a large labour unit or where a craft is practised in addition to farm work. Bida town exhibits greater extremes of poverty and wealth than the rest of the country but outstanding differences are not between individuals, but between groups, for example, urban and rural populations. It is said to be unusual to see badly-clothed men, women, or children, and under-nourishment is rare.

The traditional political offices are no longer inseparably linked with wealth, though high social status still attaches to them. Members of the *élite* can maintain their prestige fairly cheaply, as symbols of status (glazed turban or silver sword) are either heirlooms or not costly; the inherited house shows status even if in disrepair; polygyny is facilitated by the low marriage payment for "marriage in the family"[1]; travelling can be sustained by claiming hospitality from relatives.[2]

Agriculture[3]

241 Nupe farming shows considerable technical knowledge and little magic or ritual is associated with it. Shifting cultivation is practised but plots are worked for 3–4 years (Doko), 4–5 years (Mokwa), and 6–7 years (Kutigi) before they are allowed to lie fallow for from 4 to 15 years. Rotation of crops is not generally practised, though Line reported it from the area round Jima, where three years of groundnuts were followed by two of guinea-corn. Intercropping is practised and two or three crops are often grown together. The size of a plot worked by one man is usually 2–2½ acres.

A large heavy hoe (*ruku*) is used for throwing up mounds and ridges, and a small hoe (*dugba*) for weeding and lighter work. A long bush knife (*gada*), nowadays of European manufacture, is used for cutting grain stalks and digging out yams.

Farms are cleared and burnt during the dry season. First-year cultivation after clearing is in mounds; those made for yams are 2–3 ft. high, 4–5 ft. apart, and in rows 6 ft. apart. Subsequent cultivation is in ridges 1 ft. high and 3 ft. apart. Groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and some vegetables are planted in this way. Marsh cultivation is carried out in small areas of 4–6 parallel ridges. Around Doko (Beni sub-tribe) manure is obtained from the cattle of nomad Fulani, who are invited to camp on fallow plots during the dry season.

184 241 In the area west of the Kaduna River the chief cash crop is groundnuts, and cotton also grows well there. The staple food crops are millet, sorghum, yams, and, to a lesser extent, rice. Cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes are less important. The most profitable commercial crops are rice, groundnuts, cotton, and shea-nut. There is a poorer range of crops round Bida town owing to the scarcity of land; fewer yams are grown there than elsewhere and there is no bulrush millet.

In the Nupe areas of Ilorin Emirate yams are not regarded as a Nupe crop but close contact with Yoruba farmers is said to have improved the Nupe methods of cultivation. In Share[4] each farmer has two farms, one for grain and the other for

[1] See below, p. 43.
[2] Nadel, 1942, pp. 339–65; Line, 1947.
[3] Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–14, 237–8; Line, 1947.
[4] Anca. 1934–6.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

yams, where beans and other crops may also be sown. In Lanwa[6] yams and guinea-corn are planted on the same plot in alternate years, but where the land is less exhausted yams and cotton may be planted together on the same plot. In Kakanda yams were hardly grown at all when Meek was writing (1917),[6] and guinea-corn was the staple.

Two types of millet—bulrush millet and "late" millet—are widely grown. Besides being staple crops, these are the only grains which may be used for ritual offerings. Cassava, introduced by the Hausa since 1910, is of minor importance and is grown during the dry season following the rice crop on irrigated land. Two varieties of rice are grown and practically all of it goes to the south as a cash crop. Onions are grown after rice in the river marshes.[7]

Within the settlements, house plots, often tended by old men, are cultivated, the main crops being green vegetables, beans, sorrel, red peppers, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, and hemp. Sugar-cane, rice, and bananas are grown on the strips of marsh running through Bida town.[8]

The Bataci and Kyedye sub-tribes, who are mainly canoe-men and fishermen, have more recently been paying greater attention to agriculture. They grow catch crops of maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and rice on their small marshland farms. There are generally two harvests each year, crops being planted as the Niger floods recede. Deep-water rice seed was asked for by a large number of Kede District inhabitants for cultivation when fishing was slack. Round Muregi rice has recently been introduced.[9]

Some crops (yams, sweet potatoes, etc.) are stored on the farm; others in homestead granaries (*edo*). Millet and sorghum are stored unthreshed; bulrush millet may have to be dried in an oven before storing. Crops for export are not stored.

The Government established 17 mixed farms around Bida Emirate during 1937–40. Each was about 12 acres and was equipped initially with a plough and two bulls, and employed two labourers.[10]

The soil and climate are not, on the whole, conducive to successful tree cultivation, except in the forest area west of the Kaduna River, where considerable initiative has been shown in tree-planting. The only trees to be cultivated are the citrus and mango (recent introductions) and the banana. With the exception of the oil-palm and kola, the produce of all trees is collected by women. Kola-nuts are collected by men; the produce of the oil-palm is divided between the occupier of the land and the chief of the town. Trees growing on farms are left standing and not cut down.

The banana is cultivated only round Bida, Pategi, and Labozhi. Kola (*ebi*) is grown mainly by the Kusopa of Labozhi and its cultivation is a long and difficult process. The locust-bean grows well in the town and open bush and is one of the most important trees in Nupe. The skins of the bean are used for dye and for ink, the powder in the pods for sweetening, while the seeds are an indispensable ingredient of Nupe cooking. The shea-nut grows wild in thin bush country; it is picked by the women, who also extract the fat (shea-butter). Even remote hamlets have their shea-kilns and the shea-nut is the main cash crop, 75% being sold as dried nuts for export. It is little used locally, except for lamp-oil. The oil-palm grows near watercourses and in the dense forest near Yeti. The extraction of the oil is women's work as is the manufacture of soap from the oil. The oil is most important in Nupe cooking but not in external exchange. Indigo grows wild but is occasionally cultivated in two forms, grass and tree. Men make and use dye from the grass and women that procured from the trees. It is traded to Yoruba.

[6] Davies, 1920.
[6] 1917.
[7] Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–7.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[10] Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

Plants important for trade and in native industry include cotton, henna (*lali*), and hemp, both introduced from Hausa country, and gourds. The by-products of agriculture, such as grain stalks, are used by the cultivator and his family for making fences, beds, and mats; sorghum stalks yield black and red vegetable dyes. Occasionally large non-fruit-bearing trees are cut down and sold to carpenters.[11]

Organization and Division of Labour

A two-fold principle of collective family work (*efakó*) and individual work (*bucá*) applies to farm labour, and to its products, income, and granaries. Each male member of the household owns a *bucá* farm, while all work on the *efakó* farm, the produce of which is stored in the *efakó* granaries, the head controlling the disposal. Sometimes forms of productive labour other than farm work are organized according to the *efakó* system, e.g., indigo-dyeing at Mokwa.

All those who share in the *efakó* group work are housed, clothed, and fed, and have their tax and marriage payments met by the household head, who also supplies tools and pays for their repair. Personal requirements beyond this are paid for from the proceeds of the *bucá* work. The present tendency is for large *efakó* groups to disintegrate on the death of the household head, the members of the group demanding a larger measure of freedom than the *efakó* system provides.

Mutual assistance and large-scale collective labour is of two types: *egbe*, for *efakó* farm work (mainly tilling and weeding), and for work for the community as a whole, e.g., building or roofing of a chief's house, repair of a bush bridge or road or of a town wall or the N.A. rest-house, etc. *Egbe* farm work is, on the whole, performed by younger people, often members of one or more of the age-set associations; it is accompanied by drummers and musicians and concludes with a feast. Help is generally enlisted for tilling and for the first and second weeding, and *egbe* is performed first and on the largest scale on the chief's farm.

The second type of mutual assistance—*ázolo*—is less important. It is an arrangement among a number of farmers to work on each other's farms in turn, usually for the harvesting of groundnuts, cotton, and beans.

Wage labour (*kantsú*; Hausa, *lada*) plays an insignificant part in Nupe production. It is found only in large commercial centres, such as Kacha and Jebba, and in Bida for temporary employment only.

Women do practically no farm work, but they undertake the processing of agricultural produce for market and the actual marketing, and the exploitation of the shea-nut tree is entirely in the hands of women.[12]

Floor-beating is an important women's task and is made something of a ceremony. While the old women pour water on to it the young women beat the floor with wooden beaters wrapped in rugs in time to the rhythm of drums.[13]

Livestock

Cattle are of minor importance in Nupe economy. They are owned only by butchers who buy from Bornu and Fulani traders. The cattle are of the northern humped breed and are not immune from trypanosomiasis. Sheep are rarely kept for breeding but are fattened and sold.

No pigs are kept and no pork is eaten.[14] Every household keeps chickens which are bought and sold regularly in the food markets of all the larger villages. Eggs are not marketed and are eaten only rarely in Nupe country. Donkeys are kept as transport animals. Horses (mainly in Bida) are a symbol of high rank and status.[15]

[11] Nadel, 1942, pp. 59, 250–7, 238, 205–14; Line, 1947; Temple 1919, p. 236.
[12] Nadel, 1942, pp. 241–56.
[13] Malam Aliyu Bida, notes, ed. P. G. Harris.
[14] Pigs were reported in Sharegi (Share) in 1918 and Pategi in 1912 (Notes by Biscoe and Budgen).
[15] Nadel, 1942, pp. 201–4

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
FF52 Nupe FF52
Kede

its distinctive character; nor do they share the position of political supremacy which the down-stream Kede have assumed. They are, culturally, a semi-riverain group, like all the other Nupe sections whose villages lie interspersed between Kede settlements, and politically, again like these sections, subjects of the (down-stream) Kede ruling group. Thus when we shall speak in the following of the Kede political organization, we shall refer to this latter group only. The upper-stream Kede will be classified under one heading with the other semi-riverain Nupe sections, as, indeed, in native eyes, they are closer to the *kintsozi* than to the 'alien' immigrant group on the lower river. But the comparison of the two Kede groups will become of special significance at a later stage of this analysis. This strikingly unequal development in what appear to be two sections of the same tribal group should help us to isolate the factors, social or otherwise, that have moulded the political structure which we are studying.

III. Economic System

A demographic and political constellation such as we have discovered in Kede country is clearly the result of considerable group movements, possibly covering a long period. To be fully understood, such situation demands, first of all, an analysis—historical analysis, if possible—of tribal settlement. Before discussing Kede settlement, however, it is necessary to give a short description of the economic situation in the country. For, as I propose to show, the nature of Kede economics has decisively influenced the planning of Kede settlement and, indirectly, the whole political development of the tribe.

We can be very short as regards the economic system of the semi-riverain groups. They are in the main farmers, who cultivate the fertile marshland areas in the river valley. They are, besides, fishermen on a small scale, fishing from their small dug-out canoes in the backwaters and creeks of Niger and Kaduna—never in the main river, where the Kede alone are entitled to fish.

The Kede, on the other hand, are fishermen and canoemen of renown. Their name is known all down the River Niger, in districts far outside Nupe country;[1] and in their own part of the

[1] Their familiarity with the river has led to a considerable number of Kede being employed as sailors, skippers, and pilots by the Royal Niger Company and the Nigerian Marine Department.